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FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

JACK MERRY'S GRIT;
OR, MAKING A MAN OF HIMSELF. *By A SELF-MADE MAN.*



Kirby flashed the light upon the ghoulish figure and then the three saw that it was a skeleton, clothed in a single flowing garment, with its bony arms extended. Jack uttered an exclamation of astonishment, while Daisy screamed and fled.

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STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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JACK MERRY'S GRIT

OR,

MAKING A MAN OF HIMSELF

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

SANDY MAGUIRE GETS AN UNEXPECTED BATH.

"What's the trouble, Daisy?" asked Jack Merry, putting his arm protectingly around a pretty, golden-haired girl who sat sobbing, with her face buried in her hands, on the doorstep of a small roadhouse situated on the outskirts of a good-sized village close to the sea. "Has Mrs. Kirby been beating you again?"

"Yes, Jack," sobbed the girl, raising her tear-dimmed face and gazing wistfully at the stalwart, sunburned lad who carried a shallow basketful of mackerel under one arm.

"It's a shame the way the Kirbys treat you, Daisy," said Jack, indignantly. "Some day I'll forget myself and tell them both what I think of them. I feel like doing it now."

"Oh, no, no, you mustn't," she cried, catching his hand in hers. "They would drive you away from the house, and then what would I do? I'd just go out on those rocks yonder and jump into the sea. I know I would. I've nobody in all the world to love but you, Jack, and nobody but you cares at all for me."

"So you do love me, Daisy?" smiled Jack, with a sympathetic look at the little orphan whom the Kirbys had taken from the poor farm and made their drudge.

"You know I do, Jack. You are the only one who has ever been kind to me. Why shouldn't I love you?" she asked, with a pathetic smile, while the tears glistened on her eyelids like raindrops in the sunshine.

"I don't know any reason why you shouldn't, and I haven't the slightest objection to it. I think just as much of you as though you were my sister."

"Do you, Jack?" she asked, eagerly.

"Yes, I do. Why shouldn't we be brother and sister to each other? We're both orphans, aren't we?"

"Yes."

"You don't remember either of your parents, do you?"

The girl shook her head sadly.

"You don't even know how you came to be at the poor farm, do you?"

"No."

"Didn't you ever ask the matron about yourself?"

"Yes, but she wouldn't tell me anything."

"Why not?"

"I don't know."

"Was she at the farm when you were brought there?"

"I think so."

"Do you know how old you were at the time?"

"No."

"You must have been very young if you can't remember anything about the matter. You don't know how they came to call you Daisy Kent?"

"No."

"It might be your real name, and then again it mightn't. It seems to me the overseer and his wife run the poor farm to suit themselves. I have heard that the poor old people who are forced to live there are half starved and more or less abused, though I never heard you say anything about it. I guess you're afraid to tell all you know about the place."

Daisy was silent.

"Well, I'm not going to question you about it. It's the business of the village authorities and not mine to inquire

into such things. If it had been my luck to have been sent to the farm I'd have run away sooner than stand ill treatment. The Kirbys know better than to jump on my neck like they do on yours, because there'd be something doing if they did."

Which was very true, for Jack Merry was a spunky lad.

He showed the stuff he was made of the very first time that Cyrus Kirby started in to thrash him for some trivial offense soon after he came to work at the roadhouse, and the old man let him alone after that, though Mrs. Kirby never spared her tongue upon him.

It is quite possible that the Kirbys would have gotten rid of him but that he was uncommonly useful to them.

He never shirked his work, and could do as much and as well as a full-grown man, so that on the score of economy Mr. Kirby didn't want to lose him.

"How many fish did you catch to-day, Jack?"

"Oh, a whole lot. Enough to supply both of the summer hotels. I got a good price too, for they were beauties. Just look at these, and they're the worst of the batch."

"They look very nice. Mrs. Kirby will be glad, for we have to get dinner and breakfast in the morning for two visitors who are going to stay here to-night."

"Two visitors, eh? We don't often have people stay overnight. The hotels generally catch all the transient as well as the other guests."

"I tidied up the front room for them. They left two suit-cases and then went on to the village."

At that moment the shrill tone of Mrs. Kirby's voice was heard calling to the girl, so Daisy sprang up quickly and ran into the kitchen, followed at a slower pace by Jack as far as the kitchen table, on which he laid the basketful of fish, which were all cleaned and scaled ready for the pan.

Then he went into the public room of the roadhouse, where Mr. Kirby was reading a newspaper.

There were two hard-looking men, with closely-cropped hair and smoothly-shaven faces, seated at one of the tables eating sandwiches and drinking beer.

Jack went up to the counter and handed Mr. Kirby the money he had received for the fish he sold at the hotels.

The old man counted it, noted the amount with considerable satisfaction, and put it in his pocket.

One of the men at the table called for more beer and Kirby told Jack to wait on them.

Jack drew a couple of glasses from a small keg and carried them to the table.

Both of the men looked at him sharply, as if sizing him up.

Jack didn't like the looks of either of them.

In his opinion they didn't look honest.

However, as they said nothing to him, he gathered up the two empty beer glasses and returned to wash them.

"Look at the trough outside, Jack," said Kirby. "See if there's plenty of water in it. It was leaking this morning."

So Merry went out in front to look at it.

It stood about two yards in front of the veranda, which ran along the front of the roadhouse.

A team of stout horses attached to an equally stout wagon well loaded with something concealed from view by a tarpaulin cloth stood before it, with water dripping from their mouths.

Lying on the driver's seat, with his knees drawn up and his face covered with a wide-brimmed straw hat, was a boy without a jacket.

As Jack came over to the trough, which seemed to be all right, the boy on the seat raised his hat, and turning partly over, disclosed a freckled face and a shock of sandy hair.

Jack recognized him as Sandy Maguire, the son of a rather unpopular small farmer in the neighborhood.

He didn't know any good of Sandy, nor of his father, either, for that matter, while Sandy entertained a standing grouch against Merry, chiefly because Jack had given him a good whipping on one occasion for bullying Daisy Kent.

"Hello, you mutt," said Sandy from his perch.

Jack looked up at him, but said nothing.

"Yah! You lobster!" went on Maguire. "How much does Kirby pay you for cleanin' his spittoons and doin' his chores?"

"Don't get too gay, Sandy Maguire," retorted Merry, "or I might jump up there and dump you into the road."

"You won't dump me in no road, you lopsided mug," snorted Sandy, defiantly. "I've got a club up here, and if you come near me I'll let you have it on the block. You're a cheap fish pedler, and no good for nothin'. Some day I'm goin' to do you, and I won't leave enough of you to make a decent funeral!"

Jack turned a little more water into the trough, and at the same time patted the noses of the horses, for he was fond of animals.

"Leave them horses alone, d'ye hear?" roared Sandy.

Jack paid no attention to him, while the animals, recognizing a friend, rubbed their heads against his arm.

Sandy reached behind him, picked up the club he had mentioned and shook it menacingly at Merry.

Jack grinned back at him, and that exasperated Sandy. He jumped off the seat.

"Get away from there, dern you!" he snarled, putting first one foot and then the other down on the wagon tongue and starting to walk out between the horses with his club raised in a threatening manner.

Jack waited until Sandy was almost within reach of him and then drew back just a little, with a tantalizing laugh.

"I'll make you laugh on the other side of your mouth, you mutt!" roared Maguire, now hopping mad.

Thinking to catch Jack by a quick move, he laid his left hand on the neck of the horse on that side to steady himself and then leaned suddenly forward and made a vicious swipe at Merry's head.

Jack ducked the blow, and throwing up his hand, caught the end of the club.

Then he gave it a tug to get it away from Sandy.

That caused something to happen that neither expected, and the unexpected was assisted by the horse bending his head down at the moment.

Maguire lost his balance and with a yell pitched head first into the trough, causing a small waterspout to spurt into the air.

As he let go of his hold on the club Jack also fell backward and rolled over on the ground just out of reach of the water shower.

At that thrilling moment the two hard-looking men appeared at the door of the roadhouse.

CHAPTER II.

THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

"What in thunder is this?" roared the bigger of the two men, both gazing in angry surprise at the animated picture before them.

Sandy, whose body was entirely submerged except his heels, which kicked wildly about in the air, was floundering about in the bottom of the trough.

Jack was picking himself up with the club still grasped in his hand.

Then Sandy's tow head emerged from the water, like Neptune arising from the sea.

After digging the water from his eyes with the knuckles of both hands, he scrambled out of the trough like a drenched rat.

"Here, what are you two kids up to?" cried the second man, as both advanced to the wagon.

Jack concluded that it was time to beat a retreat, and did so as far as the entrance to the yard and shed, whence he watched the scene in safety and not a little enjoyment, for the catastrophe that had happened to his enemy tickled him immensely.

Sandy, with many expressions of rage, started in to explain the cause of his mishap to the men.

Of course he threw all the blame of it on Merry.

What he didn't say about Jack would have made a very small book.

"Well, you oughter stayed on the seat," replied the biggest man, with little sympathy for him. "You're a muton-headed chump to tumble into that water trough. We'll have to ride back on the goods now, for we're not goin' to get a soakin' from you. Come, now, up with you on the seat, or we'll h'ist you up in a way you won't like!"

Sandy, glowering around in search of Merry, shook his fist at Jack, and said a lot of things that wouldn't be appropriate in a Sunday school class, as soon as he spied him grinning around the corner of the house.

Then he climbed on to the seat, while the men got on the wagon and picked out the most comfortable places they could find on top of the tarpaulin.

Sandy backed the vehicle, jerked the horses around and started up a cross road leading away from the village, throwing a last malevolent look at Merry.

"That was the best ever," chuckled Jack, coming forward, now the coast was clear, and turning the water on again to make up the quantity displaced by Sandy's plunge. "That's the time he got all that was coming to him. He's a mean little beast. He'd have thought nothing of raising a lump on my head with this stick. Look at the knot on the end of it! He wouldn't have cared if he'd broken my skull. I'll have to keep my eye on him after this, lest he catch me off my guard, for he'll have it in for me worse than ever."

Turning the water off, the boy re-entered the house.

About five o'clock the two visitors returned to the roadhouse from the village.

One was a short, stout and chunky man, with bright ferret-like eyes deeply sunk in his head; the other was of medium size, with no particular characteristics.

Both were dressed in plain business suits, and when

Merry saw them in the public room he wondered if they were commercial travelers.

Half an hour later they were called to their dinner in a small room off the main one, and Daisy Kent waited on them.

At the conclusion of their meal they lit cigars and walked out into the yard.

After taking a turn or two up and down the yard, they came to a stop at the fence dividing it from the truck patch.

The stout man stood with his back against the fence, while his companion stood sideways with his elbow resting on the top rail.

They did not observe, or pay any attention to the fact, that Jack Merry was digging up some vegetables on the other side of the fence within a couple of feet of the spot where they stood.

"We seem to have lost the scent, for the time being, at least," said the stout man, blowing a cloud of smoke.

"It is evident that we have. I think we made a mistake by not continuing on by the main road instead of coming down here," said his companion.

"Well, you know what induced me to come this way," replied the stout man. "This village being out of the way and on the coast would offer the rascals facilities for shipping the goods by water, either to Boston or New York, probably the latter, by a sloop that could easily be chartered for their purpose. Such a course would be much simpler, for water leaves no trail, than to carry their booty by land in the face of almost certain detection at some point en route."

"That's true," nodded his associate. "Yet the fact that they have not yet arrived here within eighteen hours after the car was looted would indicate that they must have taken another route."

"Apparently so. That seems to settle the question of our remaining here all night as we anticipated doing. We'll have to go back to the cross roads and take up the trail again from that point and follow it along the main turnpike."

"That's right. There's no object in losing time here. Even if they've started for this village, with the object you suggested, and then turned off somewhere to remain out of sight till night, by getting here first we have blocked their little game. They cannot hire a single craft in the harbor now without inviting suspicion. The moment any stranger makes overtures of that nature he will be interviewed by the head constable, and if unable to give a satisfactory explanation, will be arrested and the general freight agent notified of the circumstance."

"Well, let's go in, pay our bill and order our rig hitched up," said the stout man.

The two men walked away and disappeared around the front of the roadhouse.

"I wonder who those men are?" mused Jack, looking after them. "Must be detectives after a gang of thieves from what I could make out of their conversation. They spoke about a car having been looted. I suppose they meant a freight car belonging to the Shore Line. The robbery may have been committed at Wexham, fifteen miles north of this place, where freight cars are shunted on a siding every day. I wonder what kind of goods was stolen? Must have been a considerable quantity if it would pay the thieves to hire a vessel to take them away in, supposing the stout

man's idea to be correct. I should think, however, that it would take a pretty big wagon to carry off the contents of a freight car, if the car was any way full."

At that moment Jack heard Daisy calling to him, so he grabbed the panful of vegetables he had dug up and hastened to the kitchen.

"Go to the stable, Jack, take out the strange horse you'll find there and hitch it to the buggy in the shed," said Daisy. "The two gentlemen have changed their minds about staying here to-night."

"All right," answered the boy, who knew why they were not going to remain.

Fifteen minutes later he led the rig around in front where the stout man and his companion were waiting on the veranda.

After stepping into the vehicle each of them handed him a quarter and then they drove off along the road in a direction opposite to the village.

About dark Cyrus Kirby told Jack to hitch the white horse to the light wagon.

"I'm going up the cross road to Farmer Stapleton's for some bags of feed," he said. "Tell Mrs. Kirby to put a dozen of them mackerel in a pan and I'll take them with me."

Merry put the horse to the wagon, got the pan of fish and then led the rig around in front.

There he found Daisy with her hat on, standing on the veranda.

"I'm going for a ride," she said, her eyes sparkling with delight.

"What, with Mr. Kirby?" cried Jack, in some astonishment.

"Yes. He said I could go along for company."

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" ejaculated Merry. "I wonder what struck him! This is the first time I've known him to give you an airing. I guess it's because the ride to the Stapleton farm is rather lonesome, and because it goes by the haunted house."

"Do you really believe that house is haunted, Jack?" asked Daisy, nervously.

"Haunted, your grandmother! Of course I don't! There's no such thing."

"But I heard awful stories about it when I was at the poor farm. The man who built it hanged himself there after his wife died."

"Suppose he did, what difference does it make? He's been dead and gone these twelve years, and there is no such thing as people getting back to this world once they are dead and buried."

"Why do they say it's haunted, then?"

"Blessed if I know, unless because the place has a bad name. It belongs to the only remaining member of the family, a son who was away from home at the time his father committed suicide, and he hasn't been able to get a tenant for the place, and won't live there himself."

Further conversation on the subject was cut short by the appearance of Cyrus Kirby, who carried a lantern in his hand, which he put under the wagon seat.

He and Daisy got in and drove off.

Half an hour later Jack closed up the house and sat down on the veranda.

He hadn't been there over five minutes when a farm wagon came rattling up.

The driver, who was a boy, brought his horses up to the trough to give them a drink.

Merry recognized him as his particular friend, Bob Stapleton.

"Hello, Bob," he said, coming forward. "Been to the village, I see."

"That's right," replied Bob. "Glad to see you. Didn't notice you till you spoke. How's things?"

"Same as usual. I was off fishing the greater part of the day."

"I'd liked to have been with you."

"I wish you had."

"What did you catch? Mackerel?"

"Yes, about twelve dozen of beauties."

"Haven't you got one or two to spare in the house?" asked Bob, smacking his lips in anticipation of a treat, for mackerel was a favorite of his.

"Oh, you'll have all you want for breakfast," replied Jack.

"How will I?"

"Mr. Kirby went out to your place a little while ago in the wagon after a load of feed, and he carried a dozen of the fish with him."

"Did he? Then ma will have some broiled in the morning," said Bob, in a satisfied tone. "Say, what's the matter with you jumping in and riding out with me? You can come back with Mr. Kirby."

"I guess I will," replied Jack.

He mounted to the seat beside his friend, and they were presently driving out along the cross road which led to both the Stapleton and Maguire farms.

On their way they passed the decaying two-story dwelling, standing close to the road, which had the reputation of being haunted.

Neither lad paid any attention to it, though had they been able to see behind it they would have observed a team of horses and a stout wagon, the same which had been driven by Sandy Maguire, standing in the shadow of the kitchen.

When they reached the Stapleton farm they found Mr. Kirby on the point of returning, so Jack bade Bob good-night and climbed into the body of the light wagon, allowing his legs to hang out behind.

It was a dark, moonless night, and the road was decidedly lonesome.

As they approached the haunted house Mr. Kirby suddenly uttered an exclamation and pointed his whip toward the building.

Jack and Daisy both looked and saw a ghostly kind of light showing through one of the lower windows.

CHAPTER III.

A BLOW IN THE DARK.

"Whoa!" exclaimed Cyrus Kirby, reining in the horse.

The three watched the light attentively until it suddenly disappeared, leaving the old house dark and somber as when they first passed that way.

"Jim Davis saw that light the night afore last, and it skeered him the worst kind of way," chuckled the old man,

who did not seem to be disturbed by the ghostly manifestation.

"There's evidently somebody in the house—maybe tramps," said Jack.

"Well, I'm goin' to see who is there, for I don't take no stock in the stories that the old rookery is haunted. Here, you hold the reins, Daisy. You can come with me, Jack," and he reached under the seat for the lantern, the light in which was turned down low.

"Oh, dear," said Daisy, as Merry jumped off into the road, prepared to accompany Mr. Kirby. "I don't want to stay here alone."

"Then come with us," said Jack. "I'll tie Whitie to the fence so he won't walk away."

"I'm afraid to go in that house," the girl said, with a shiver.

"You'll have to come with us or remain here on the wagon. Better stay by the wagon, we won't be long, I guess."

"No, I'll go with you, Jack, if you'll hold my hand."

"All right. I'll see that nothing happens to you."

He helped Daisy down and the three started through the open gate for the front door of the house, Kirby in advance with the lantern, the light of which he had turned up.

When they reached the front door the old man laid his hand on the knob and turned it.

With a harsh, squeaky noise, that sent Daisy's heart into her mouth, the door opened slowly and reluctantly, admitting them into the main hallway.

It was a spacious entry, and it was here the owner's body had been found hanging limp and dead at the rear end of it, close to the stairway leading to the floor above.

He had attached the rope to the foot of the banisters above, and then, after putting the noose about his neck, had dropped straight down, breaking his neck instantly.

The hallway was intensely dark, the rays of the lantern illuminating little more than the spot where they stood.

They advanced a few paces, then stopped and listened intently.

Not a sound reached their ears, though they waited two or three minutes in perfect silence.

"Oh, Jack, don't let's go any further," quivered Daisy. "I'm so frightened."

"What are you frightened about? We'll leave the door open. There's nothing in here to alarm you."

"What's that?" she cried, in terror. "There's something white at the other end of the hall. Don't you see it?"

Jack and Mr. Kirby followed the direction of her shaking finger, and did make out something white, seemingly floating in the air.

It was so indistinct that neither could make out what it could be.

With one accord they advanced a yard or two in order to satisfy themselves as to whether there really was something before them or not.

Daisy held tightly to Merry's hand, and followed as a matter of course.

The closer they approached the seeming object the clearer it became that there was something, apparently in mid-air, at the end of the hall, and in the exact spot where the owner of the house had killed himself.

"Oh, my!" shivered Daisy, "it's some dreadful thing, I know it is. Dear, dear, Jack, don't go any closer!"

"Pooh!" replied the boy, who did not take any stock in things unearthly. "It's nothing but a white cloth. Lift the lantern up, Mr. Kirby, and let's see what it really is."

There was evidently something there besides the cloth—something long, thin and awe-inspiring.

Kirby flashed the light upon the grewsome figure, and then the three saw that it was a skeleton, clothed in a single flowing garment, with its bony arms extended.

Jack uttered an exclamation of astonishment, while Daisy screamed and fled.

The old man was a bit staggered, and came near dropping the lantern.

Both he and Merry gazed on the swinging object in silence.

Under the circumstances it was enough to give their nerves something of a shock to come face to face with such a grisly apparition, hanging as it was in the very spot, and in much the same manner, that the body of the suicide had been found.

Jack grabbed the lantern from Kirby's hand and walked right up to the skeleton.

"That's been hung here to scare people away," he said. "Was it done as a practical joke or for some other reason?"

As he uttered the words a loud scream from Daisy on the outside caused him to drop the lantern and make a quick break for the door.

As he rushed out of the building he saw the girl struggling with somebody in the road.

He cleared the neglected garden space in a couple of bounds.

Dashing through the gate, he saw that it was a boy who had hold of the girl.

Instinct seemed to tell him that the boy was Sandy Maguire, though he could not make out his identity in the dark.

The young rascal saw him coming, and releasing Daisy, he fled down the road a way and then climbed the fence.

Merry did not pause to say a word to the girl, but put after her aggressor at full speed.

He reached him just as the chap straddled the fence and was pulling up his leg to drop over on the other side.

Jack reached out and seized him by the shoe.

"Let go, dern you!" snarled the voice of Sandy.

"So it's you, Sandy Maguire," cried Jack. "I thought as much. You didn't get enough up at the roadhouse this afternoon to satisfy you. Well, I'll give you all you want now, and more to boot."

"Let go, will you!" howled Sandy, kicking out viciously.

Jack lost his grip on his shoe and the young rascal tumbled over on the other side of the fence.

Merry, however, was determined to give him a beating, and vaulted the fence.

Sandy was up before he could reach him, and dashed away into the darkness.

But his pursuer didn't lose sight of him, and set a hot pace across the barren field.

Sandy, seeing that he was sure to be caught if he kept on, turned and made for the fence that separated the field from the yard of the haunted house.

Jack just missed catching him as he went over the fence and sprang after him.

"I'll have you in a moment or two, and then look out," he said, grimly.

"Yah!" returned Maguire, defiantly, as he dashed for the house.

Then it was that Jack, as he chased his enemy across the yard, noticed the wagon and pair of horses.

The wagon was empty except for a crumpled piece of tarpaulin cloth thrown carelessly into it.

Merry recognized the wagon as the one that had been at the roadhouse that afternoon, and knew it belonged to Owen Maguire, Sandy's father.

Sandy, looking over his shoulder, saw that he would be caught before he could enter the house, so he darted around the horses' heads, and reaching the end of the vehicle, paused to see on which side Jack was coming.

He didn't have to wait long before Merry shot around the horses, too.

Then Sandy skipped around till he reached the horses' heads again.

Jack, nothing daunted, kept right at his heels.

In this manner they circled the team twice and Merry hadn't gained any advantage over his enemy.

They both, as if by mutual consent, paused on opposite sides of the wagon to catch their breath.

"Why don't you catch me, you mutt, you?" sneered Sandy, with a ring of triumph in his tones.

"I'll catch you, don't you worry," replied Jack, in a resolute tone.

"I think I see you doin' it, you lobster," mocked Sandy.

"You'll know it when I get my hands on you," retorted Jack.

"Ho, talk is cheap," chuckled Sandy.

Merry started after him again, but failed to catch him, and they stopped again and looked at each other from opposite sides of the vehicle.

"You don't seem to be catchin' me, muttonhead," yawned Sandy.

"The more trouble you give me the worse it will be for you when I do lay my hands on you," said Jack, intensely annoyed at his failure to reach the young rascal.

"Oh, my, hear the pie-faced dude talk!" sneered Sandy.

"You couldn't catch me if you tried all night."

"Keep on thinking so, and maybe you won't fetch up with a jar that'll make you think a house fell on you."

"Why don't you come on, then? I'm gettin' lazy waitin' for you. This is a picnic keepin' out of your way."

Sandy stooped, picked up a small stone and shied it across at Merry.

It narrowly missed Jack's face, and made him mad.

As Sandy was about to repeat the trick, Merry started after him again.

This time he determined to catch the rascal, and so he redoubled his exertions.

Round and round the team they flew, Jack slowly but surely gaining on his enemy.

At length Sandy, in his wild flight, stumbled and fell.

Before he could get up Jack was upon him like a carload of bricks.

"Now, I've got you. I won't do a thing to you, you little

beast. This is the second time you've annoyed Daisy, and it's the second licking you're going to get for it."

Sandy yelled, "Murder! Help!"

"Get up and take your whipping like a man," cried Merry, yanking him up by the collar.

Sandy kicked backward, landing on Jack's shins, whereupon Merry struck him on the jaw and Maguire went down with a dismal howl.

"Get up, you coward!" shouted Jack. "Get up, or I'll——"

The words ended in a gasp, for a husky form glided toward him in the gloom from behind and dealt him a terrific blow on the head.

Merry let go of Sandy, staggered and fell upon the ground.

There he lay, quite motionless and bereft of consciousness.

CHAPTER IV.

A PRISONER IN THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

When Jack came to his senses he was in total darkness.

His first sensation was that of bewilderment, but gradually his mind grew clear, and he recollected what had happened to him.

"Where the deuce am I? I must be in some building. What building could that be but the haunted house? Gee! My hands are bound behind my back and my ankles are tied together. I wonder who it was crept up behind me and knocked me out while I was bending over Sandy? Could it have been his father, who was in the house while I was chasing his son, or was it one of those tough chaps who were at the roadhouse this afternoon and who drove off with Sandy up the crossroad? What is Sandy, or his father, or the tough men, or the team, doing at this house, anyway, especially at night? And why is that skeleton hanging in the hallway? The whole thing looks mysterious, as well as suspicious."

That's the way Jack argued the matter, and on top of it he wondered why he had been bound hand and foot and brought into the house, and what his captor's intentions were toward him.

He could dimly make out that he was in a small room, or at least a place having apparently four walls.

"I'll bet this is Sandy's doings," he thought. "The little beast took advantage of my being knocked out and got his father, or whoever it was whacked me, to help carry me into the house. I suppose he means to hold me a prisoner a while just for satisfaction. It's like the little rascal. But just wait till I get free, that's all. I'll pay him up with interest, you can bet your boots!" and Merry nodded his head angrily in the dark.

As Jack didn't at all like the idea of being trussed up like a sheep or pig on its way to market, he began to make an effort to free his hands.

He soon found that this was no easy matter.

The rope had been knotted around his wrists, and then had been put around his waist and tied to his wrists again.

It looked as if he was tied to remain so, unless released by somebody else.

"This is pleasant, upon my word," he growled. "There doesn't seem to be much doubt but I'll have to remain in

this place all night. All right, Mr. Sandy, I won't do a thing to you when the time comes."

At that moment he heard footsteps over his head.

"Hello, there is somebody in the house," ejaculated Merry. "I thought I was left here all alone in the old rookery, but it appears not. I can make out two or three persons walking around. There is something doing in this place—something that can't be strictly regular, otherwise why should people be monkeying around a deserted habitation with the tough reputation this one has? I'd give something to know what brought Sandy and his team here. He is in the game, whatever it is. And it isn't honest work that people have to do at night and in unfrequented places."

As Merry reached that reasonable conclusion he heard somebody descending a flight of creaking steps.

Then he heard the steps, preceded by an intermittent flash of light along the floor, which was reflected under the wide crack of what appeared to be a door in his prison pen, coming in his direction.

The person, whoever he was, stopped outside the door, freed a hasp that held it shut, and threw it open.

Then in walked Sandy Maguire with a lantern.

He flashed the light in Jack's face and saw that he was conscious and sitting up with his back against the wall.

"Well, you mug," he grinned in a highly satisfied way, "how do you like your new lodgin's?"

"I suppose I owe this to you, Mr. Sandy?" replied Merry, coolly.

Sandy chuckled, pulled an old dilapidated box toward him and sat down, holding the lantern between his spread legs.

"That's the way the fishermen tie the claws of lobsters to keep 'em quiet," he said, with another complacent grin. "You're a lobster, so I tied your claws to keep you quiet."

"You think you're pretty smart, don't you?" retorted Jack, with an ominous flash in his eyes that boded no good for Sandy in the near future.

"I've got you where I want you, you mutt, and I'm goin' to settle scores with you before you get back to the roadhouse."

"What are you going to do?"

"That's for me to know and you to find out."

"You're a mean, cowardly little beast."

"Don't you call me names, or I'll kick the stuffin' out of you," growled Sandy.

"And what will I do to you when I get the chance?" flashed Merry.

"You won't do a thing if you know when you're well off. I owe you for pulling me into the water this afternoon, and for punchin' me in the jaw to-night, and for pitchin' into me a month ago 'cause I jest spoke to Daisy Kent."

"I haven't settled with you yet for what you did to her to-night, and whatever tricks you play on me now when I'm not in a position to defend myself I'll remember in a way you won't like."

"Hear the cock crow!" ejaculated Sandy, with a wicked little laugh.

"You'd better release me, for it will save you the biggest licking you ever got in your life."

"Don't you wish I would? Do you see any green in my eye? You're goin' to stay in the haunted house all night

alone by yourself. Perhaps old Green's ghost will come down here and frighten the life out of you. He hung himself on the floor above, and his spook walks every night all over the place until the cocks crow."

Sandy chuckled gleefully as if he thought he was having a fine revenge on Jack.

Merry felt relieved at his words.

The prospect of a visit from the suicide's ghost, which he regarded as very remote, did not worry him half as much as the idea that Sandy might have intended to beat and kick him while he lay completely at his mercy.

Somehow or another Jack had no fear of dead people—the feeling was inborn in him.

If he had been asked to choose between occupying a room all alone in a house with a corpse, or taking a good whipping, he would have accepted the former as the least of two unpleasant things.

Consequently, Sandy's words did not disturb him in the sense in which they were intended; but, nevertheless, he did not relish the idea of passing a physically uncomfortable night.

"To-morrow mornin' I'm goin' to bring a cowhide over here and give you a taste of it," went on Sandy. "That'll warm you up if you catch cold durin' the night."

Thus speaking, Maguire got up, flashed the light around the place which Merry saw was merely a small section of the cellar of the house, roughly partitioned off as a receptacle probably for chopped wood, a small pile of which, covered with dust and cobwebs, lay in one corner, and then backed toward the doorway.

"Good-night, muttonhead. Give my respects to the ghost when he calls on you," chuckled Sandy.

Then he walked out, slammed the door, adjusted the hasp, and presently his footsteps were heard ascending the cellar steps.

Bang!

The sound reverberated through the cellar.

Sandy had dropped the trap-door at the head of the stairs so as to make as much noise below as possible.

He knew the sound would reach Merry's ears, and he wanted to make things as unpleasant as possible for him.

Then Jack heard the back door banged to, though he didn't hear the echoes that went through the empty house above the cellar.

After that there was complete silence, and Merry felt that he was isolated in the old building.

He wondered how Mr. Kirby and Daisy looked upon his failure to return after starting in chase of the girl's assailant.

No doubt the old man, after waiting a reasonable time for him to show up, had gone on, leaving the boy to follow on foot at leisure.

Jack made another ineffectual attempt to free his hands, and then gave it up.

After vowing vengeance against Sandy for the second or third time, he leaned back against the wall and began to think again about the wagon and why it had been standing in the back yard of the haunted house.

The more he thought about it the more interested he grew in the matter.

Suddenly the brief conversation he had accidentally overheard between the stout man and his companion, whom he

had sized up as detectives, when they were standing against the fence of the truck patch, recurred to his mind.

Then, like a flash, it dawned upon him that perhaps he had an explanation of the whole thing.

He remembered that when the wagon was drawn up before the roadhouse it was heavily loaded, and that the load was carefully covered with a tarpaulin cloth.

Then the two hard-looking men, whom he had supposed Sandy was merely giving a lift on the road, must have been connected with it.

It began to look as though the Maguire farm wagon had been used to carry off the plunder from the looted car at Wexham siding, and that the two men in question were the thieves.

If this fact was correct there was no doubt but that Farmer Owen Maguire and his precious son were accomplices in the robbery, notwithstanding that the elder Maguire had not taken an active part in the affair.

"The stolen goods are clearly in this house now," thought Merry, "for the wagon was empty when I saw it in the yard outside. They have selected the haunted house to hide their plunder in until the hue and cry has died out, because no one would ever think of looking here for them. Nobody ever comes to the house, and hasn't for years. It is certainly a dandy hiding place. They expect to be able to keep the stuff here in perfect safety until enough time has elapsed to enable them to cart it away without incurring suspicion. It's a mighty clever scheme, but I guess I'll upset their calculations for them. As soon as I am let go I'll notify the head constable of the village that I have reason to believe that the stuff stolen from the freight car at Wexham is hidden in this house and he can investigate the matter. If the goods are recovered through me I ought to get something from the railroad company. That would only be fair. I wish I could release myself before morning. Sandy might bring that whip as he threatened to do, and while I'm tied up in this shape he could lash me until he got tired. He's coward enough to take such a revenge."

Merry, alive to the importance of his probable discovery, made a more determined effort than ever to free himself.

In working his wrists about, the fingers of his right hand came into contact with the knot that happened to be the key to the situation.

Had this knot been out of his reach he never could have gotten his hands loose, in spite of his best efforts, and if it had been tied hard enough he could hardly have made any impression on it.

It happened, however, that the circumstances were favorable for Jack.

By twisting his left wrist around and holding it in a certain position the knot came within easy reach of the active fingers of his other hand, and as the knot was tied only fairly tight, he soon began to loosen it.

He kept on the job steadily until the knot was entirely opened up.

That released the end of the line encircling his waist, which created the necessary slack for the boy to draw on so that in a little while he was able to draw one hand out of the wrist loop.

The other hand followed as a matter of course.

To put his hand in his pocket, pull out his jackknife and

cut the piece of rope which held his ankles together was an easy matter.

"It feels good to have the use of my limbs again," he breathed, as he stood up, "though my wrists are blamed sore. I'm thinking Sandy Maguire is going to get left this trip, as usual. Now, to get out of the wood bin. I hope that won't stump me, for it's secured on the other side by something, probably a hasp."

Merry lit a match and examined the fastening of the door.

It was a hasp that held it.

As there was a good deal of play to it, the door moved back and forth about two inches.

By moving it out, Jack saw by the aid of another match that the hasp was held in place by a small wooden staple.

The long blade of his knife would easily reach it through the crack made by the yielding door.

All the boy had to do was to put the blade under the point of the staple and press upward.

The staple popped out without difficulty, the door swung open and he was free.

CHAPTER V.

JACK MERRY VERIFIES HIS OWN CONCLUSIONS.

Jack lit another match when he stepped out into the cellar in order to get his bearings.

Looking around him he saw that the cellar was an uncommonly good one, quite dry, but thickly covered with dust and cobwebs.

A few yards away were the stairs leading to the trap, and Merry made for them at once, after closing the door of the bin and replacing the staple.

"That will give Sandy a problem to solve—how I got out of the bin—when he comes here in the morning and finds me gone," chuckled Jack.

He found no trouble in lifting the trap and was soon standing in the dark entry on the ground floor of the building.

He lit a match to look for a way out, and spied the lantern Sandy had used on the floor.

That put an idea into his head.

"I'll light this and look through the house to see where they have put the stolen goods. If I don't find any that will prove I've been away off in my conclusions, but I'd be willing to bet a dollar to a doughnut that I do find the stuff."

He lighted the lantern and started up the back stairway built in the entry.

He examined every room on the floor above without finding anything visible but dust.

The roomy closets were just as bare, too.

"They may have carried it into the attic," mused Merry, so up into the attic he went.

It extended the full length of the house and was divided into two sections.

Jack carefully looked both over without result.

He found nothing but dust, refuse and festoons of dirty cobwebs.

"Gee!" he said, scratching his head in a disappointed way. "I guess I'm not so smart as I thought I was. The goods are evidently not in the house."

As he walked slowly downstairs he thought of the skeleton in the front hall.

He flashed the light over the banisters and looked down. The uncanny-looking object was still hanging there, like a criminal who had just been executed.

The front door being shut, there was no draft to stir its white shroud, and it clung close to its bony anatomy.

Jack shook the rope and a most unearthly rattle of articulated bones smote upon his ear, while the skeleton danced a grewsome jig in mid-air.

"You must have been stolen from some doctor's office," thought Merry, as the skeleton gradually subsided into solemn quietness again. "I dare say you're worth money. I guess I'll haul you up and put you out of harm's way."

Putting down the lantern Jack pulled the skeleton up with its polished head and grinning teeth.

He found that he could easily press the extended arms down to the skeleton's sides, for they worked on sockets.

The leg joints were fastened with silver wire, and wobbled about at random.

Jack carefully dragged the skeleton to one of the big closets and sat it up inside, then he shut the door on it.

After a last look around he descended to the ground floor and went through all the rooms there, hardly expecting to find any trace of the goods, as he did not consider the lower floor as safe a place for the plunder as the upper ones.

He was not greatly disappointed when he found the ground floor as bare as the rest of the house.

He was about to blow the light out and take his departure when he recollected that he had not considered the cellar as a receptacle for the stolen property.

"Come to think of it, I'll bet that's where they've put it if they brought it to this house, and something must have been brought here, or why should the empty wagon be in the yard?"

Down into the cellar went Merry with the lantern.

He knew there was nothing at the back near the bins and stairway, so he went forward.

He found no sign of anything like merchandise of any description, but he noticed a good-sized wooden bin that looked as if it had been newly put up.

The door was secured by a stout hasp, locked with a new padlock.

Jack flashed the light all over it, and then looked at the padlock again with an intelligent expression.

"The stuff is in this bin, or I don't know what I'm talking about. It's been put up on purpose to hold it. Those rascals are evidently not taking any more chances than they can help. It's a wonder, though, that they didn't nail up the front door and padlock the back one in order to make things surer. I suppose they rely more on the fact that nobody comes here, and they think that skeleton as they had it would frighten any chance prowler into fits, and increase the haunted reputation of the building. It's clearer to me than ever that Farmer Maguire has had no small hand in this game. A couple of thieves, new to the neighborhood, never would have picked this house out as a place in which to hide their plunder. Maguire is the man who did it, and the rascals who looted the car are putting up at his house until they think it will be safe to move the plunder."

Although Jack was confident that the stolen goods were

in the big bin, he wanted to make certain of the fact if he could.

The lantern revealed no opening that he could throw a light through, and consequently he did not see how he could get a sight at them.

He noticed a big knot in one of the planks, and it occurred to him that he might break it in and thus secure a hole that might answer his purpose.

Looking around the cellar for some implement to accomplish his object, he found a heavy cold chisel.

Two good blows demolished the knot, leaving space enough for the boy to easily insert his hand with a match in his fingers.

Striking the match on the inside, the moment it flared up Jack applied his eye above his wrist and caught a brief glimpse of the inside of the bin.

It was filled with packages that must have been taken from cases, and these were snugly piled up inside so that they occupied about three-quarters of the space in the bin.

"That settles the question. The goods are here all right. Now it's up to me to put a spoke in the rascals' wheel and earn the gratitude of the railroad company, which I hope the officials will express in a substantial form," said Jack to himself.

Having no further reason for remaining in the cellar, Merry returned to the entry above, blew out the lantern light and was on the point of entering the kitchen when the back door was thrown open without the least warning and two men entered the room.

Jack sprang back into the entry with considerable haste and trepidation.

"What's that?" exclaimed one of the intruders.

"What are you talking about?" asked his companion, whose ears were apparently not as sharp as the other's.

"I heard a noise over by the door. Where's the lantern?"

"The kid said he left it in the entry," was the reply. "I didn't hear any noise."

"Well, I did. Listen!"

The two men remained silent and motionless in the next room, and Merry took advantage of their momentary inaction to quietly remove his shoes preparatory to slipping up the back stairs.

Before commencing his retreat he thought he would try to create another diversion by placing the lantern in the doorway leading into the entry, hoping one of the men would trip over it and put it out of business.

"I guess you didn't hear any noise, Baxter," laughed the second speaker in a half jeering tone.

"I tell you I did, Larkin," replied Baxter.

"What did it sound like?"

"Footsteps."

"Bosh! There's nobody in the house but ourselves."

"How do you know there isn't? We've been away from here three hours."

"What of it? Didn't Maguire assure us that nobody ever comes here because the building has the reputation of being haunted?"

"Just the same there was a man, a boy and a girl had the nerve to enter a short time after we finished gettin' the goods into the cellar. They saw the skeleton in the front hall and the girl seemed to be the only one who was much scared by it. Then that crazy Sandy had to put his foot in

it by larkin' with the girl in the road, which caused the young fellow to chase him till he caught him in the yard. Then I had to slug him to save the kid from a lickin'."

"Of course you did. And then you helped tie him and carry him down into that bin in the cellar to oblige Sandy, who wanted to leave him here all night by himself, because he thought it would frighten the chap out of his boots. Well, I objected to it on general principles, but what I said didn't go, so if any trouble comes from it it will be up to you."

"What trouble can come from it?" growled the man named Baxter. "Sandy is goin' to let him go in the mornin' after givin' him a rawhidin', and that's all there'll be to it. Come on, let's go into the entry for the lantern."

While they were talking Jack tiptoed part of the way up the flight of stairs.

Baxter started to walk through the door when he tripped over the lantern, without breaking it, however, and went sprawling on the floor.

He started to swear like a trooper, while his companion struck a match and wanted to know what was the matter.

"Matter!" roared Baxter. "Why, that kid left the lantern in the doorway and I've nearly broken my shins over it."

"In the doorway!" exclaimed Larkin. "He told me that he left it against the wall, near the door."

"He's a liar! It was in the doorway right in my path. Pick it up and light it. I hope it isn't broken."

Merry had retreated the balance of the way up the stairs under cover of Baxter's fall, and now stood on the landing listening to the men below.

Larkin struck a match, declared the lantern was all right, and lit it.

Then he threw the light about the entry.

"Hello," he cried, "the trap is open!"

"Gee!" breathed Jack. "I forgot to close it the last time I came up."

"That's more of the kid's carelessness. He went down to see the prisoner and forgot to shut it down when he came up. We'll have to dust his whiskers for him," said Baxter.

"I asked him particularly before we left the yard if he had closed the trap, and he told me he did. Maybe there's somebody down there. It would account for the noise you say you heard."

"If there's anybody down there we'll knock the daylights out of him," replied Baxter, in a threatening tone.

The two men then went down into the cellar, shutting the trap after them.

"Now is my time to skip," said Jack, gliding down the stairs in his stockinged feet and going to the kitchen door, where he paused to put on his shoes.

As he put his hand on the knob of the outer door he heard the trap-door in the entry bang against the wall and the voices of the two rascals coming up the steps.

"I haven't a moment to lose," breathed Merry. "I wouldn't be surprised but they looked into the wood bin and found that I had got out."

He opened the door, shut it softly after him and dashed across the yard for the nearest shelter.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ROUND-UP.

Jumping the fence and dropping behind it he looked back at the house just in time to distinguish the figures of the two men coming out at the kitchen door.

They came a few feet into the yard and looked around, then they walked down to the road and looked around as well as they could in the darkness.

"That looks as if they have discovered my escape," thought Jack from his place of concealment. "That won't do them any good now. They couldn't catch me even if they caught sight of me to save their lives."

The men stood some little time by the road talking, and Merry watched them, wondering what they would do next.

They finally returned to the house and went in.

Jack waited a quarter of an hour longer, and as they did not reappear he decided that they had gone back to the cellar, where they doubtless intended to sleep.

"I'd better be getting on. It must be after midnight. I must go to the village, rouse up the constable and tell him my story. By coming here at once with a couple of his men he'll be able to catch those two rascals and nail the stolen goods at the same time. Then he can attend to Farmer Maguire and his son afterward."

Jack got on his feet and started for the road.

He had a two-mile walk before him to the roadhouse where he lived, and another half mile to cover before he reached the constable's house.

He put his best foot forward and covered the two miles in a little less than half an hour.

The roadhouse was right before him, dark and silent.

He turned into the shore road, as it was called, and started for the more settled part of the village.

He had gone but a few steps when he heard the lively rattle of a light vehicle coming on behind him.

"Who the dickens is on the road at this hour?" thought Jack, stopping and looking back.

He saw that it was a buggy with two men in it.

As it came close up and turned in to the roadhouse, the driver reining in the horse, Jack noticed that one of the men was short and stout.

"Can they be the detectives back again?" he asked himself. "I believe they are. I'm going to see, for I'd sooner tell my story to them than to the constable. Besides, it would save me the walk into the village and back."

Accordingly, Merry ran up to the buggy just as the men alighted.

As soon as he was close to them he recognized the two men at once.

"Hello!" exclaimed the stout man. "Who are you?"

"I'm the boy that lives here," answered Jack. "Don't you remember me?"

"Oh, yes. You're the boy who brought the rig around when we left here shortly after dinner. You're up late, young man. I suppose you've just come from the village?"

"No, sir. I came down the cross road yonder. May I ask you a question?"

"Certainly, and we shall probably have a few to ask you."

"Are you detectives?"

"Why do you ask that question?" asked the stout man, sharply.

"Because I believe you are hunting for some goods that were stolen from a freight car at Wexham siding."

"Ha! What do you know about the matter, young man? Have you seen the wagon?"

"Yes, sir. I've not only seen the wagon that carried the goods off, but I know where the goods and the thieves are at this moment."

"You do!" ejaculated the stout man, eagerly. "Let us know all about it. You shall be rewarded for the information, and if the goods are recovered you shall be paid \$2,000, for that is the amount of the reward which has already been posted for information leading to the capture of the thieves and recovery of their plunder."

"Then you are detectives?" Said Jack.

"I am one of the Shore Line detectives. My name is Wheeler. This gentleman is Mr. Cook, assistant general freight agent of the same road. We are down here trying to trace the goods stolen from freight car 2001, at the Wexham siding, and if possible to arrest the thieves. Now we will hear your story, if you please. By the way, what is your name?"

"Jack Merry."

"We are ready to listen to you, Merry," said Detective Wheeler, after writing his name in his notebook.

Accordingly, Jack told his story, beginning with his run-in with Sandy Maguire at the water trough, when the wagon, heavily loaded and covered with a tarpaulin, first came under his observation.

He said the two men accompanying the wagon at the time had attracted his attention by their tough appearance, and he did not like their looks.

After his row with Sandy they had boarded the wagon and the outfit drove off down the cross road.

"You say the wagon belongs to Farmer Owen Maguire and was driven by his son?" said the stout man, making a note of the fact in his book.

"Yes, sir."

"Very well, go on."

Merry then continued his story from the point when Mr. Kirby, Daisy and himself saw the light in the haunted house on their way back to the roadhouse from Farmer Stapleton's, and how they had stopped to investigate it.

He told about the skeleton that they discovered in the hall, about his chase of Sandy, about his finding the same wagon standing empty in the yard, and about his being knocked out by a blow from some unknown person, whom he subsequently found out was one of the two men who had stopped at the roadhouse.

He related how, when he recovered his senses, he found himself bound and locked in a bin in the cellar.

Then followed his interview with Sandy and his subsequent escape.

He told how, impressed with the idea that things were not just as they should be, he had searched the house and finally discovered a new bin in the cellar filled with packages of merchandise, the character of whose contents he could not determine.

He felt certain, however, that they were the goods stolen from the freight car.

"When I got away from the house the two men were

there, and I judge they intend to remain all night in the cellar," concluded Merry.

"I think you have spotted both the men and the goods, young man," said Detective Wheeler, "and I congratulate you on the excellent chance you have of winning the reward offered by the railroad company. Come, Mr. Cook, we must drive to the head constable's house and get him out of bed. Then we will make arrangements for going to this haunted house with a force sufficient to capture the two rascals and regain possession of the stolen property. You'd better jump in, Merry, and come with us."

They were soon at the constable's home and had him out of bed in a jiffy.

It took but a brief explanation to get him to fall in with their plans.

He hitched up his horse to a light wagon and then hunted up two of the under constables.

The whole party then started for the haunted house.

It was now about two in the morning.

They reined in under a big oak tree within a short distance of the house.

"We'll leave you in charge of the vehicles, Merry," said the stout detective. "Keep your eye on the front of the house. When you see one of us swing a lantern around in the air it will be the signal for you to drive up the light wagon. Understand?"

"Yes, sir," replied Jack.

Then the five men got over into the adjacent field and quietly approached the haunted house from the rear.

"There'll be something doing in that cellar pretty soon," said the boy to himself, as he watched the constables, detective and freight agent climb the fence, cross the yard and disappear behind the building.

After that the minutes slipped slowly by to the excited lad, who could only surmise what was going on.

He kept on the alert for the reappearance of the men and the expected signal.

At length he saw them coming around the corner of the building in a bunch, one of them with the lantern in his hand.

The lantern was swung three times in the air.

Jack, who was seated in the constable's wagon, with the horse and buggy hitched behind, started his horse and drove down to the gate in front of the haunted house.

He saw, as he approached, that they had the two men in custody.

With their arms bound behind them, they were loaded on the wagon, and the head constable took Jack's place.

The stout detective told the boy to get into the buggy and followed himself.

Freight Agent Cook and one of the constables were left behind to look after the recovered goods.

The two thieves were conveyed to the village lock-up and put into a cell, Jack being left at the roadhouse on the way after being instructed by the detective to tell Mr. Kirby that his presence would be required about ten in the morning at the justice's office.

Although all the doors of the roadhouse were locked, Merry didn't have to arouse any of the inmates to get in.

All he had to do was to climb on to the roof of the kitchen, and then make his way to the open window of his room.

He was soon in bed dreaming of his late adventures in the haunted house.

CHAPTER VII.

JACK GETS THE REWARD.

"Oh, Jack," exclaimed Daisy next morning, when Merry appeared in the kitchen, "do tell me where you went last night. Mr. Kirby waited quite a while for you to come back, and when you didn't we had to drive back without you. Did you catch Sandy Maguire?"

"I did, but it's too long a story to tell you now. I had quite a lot of adventure before I got back home. You'll hear all about it later on."

After breakfast he told Mr. Kirby what had happened during the night, and the old man was greatly astonished.

"I've got to appear at the justice's office this morning to tell my story," concluded Jack. "I suppose you have no objection."

Mr. Kirby gave his permission, for he knew the boy would have to go whether he liked it or not.

While they were talking the constable's light wagon passed the roadhouse with two officers having Sandy Maguire and his father in custody.

Jack saw them through the window and he chuckled to himself.

"Sandy will find that he's up against it this time for fair," he thought, as the wagon disappeared into the village.

At a little after nine Detective Wheeler drove up in his buggy.

He came after Jack.

The boy got in the vehicle and was driven to the office of the justice, where quite a crowd was gathered by this time, the news having spread about the village in a remarkably short time.

A big wagon, loaded with the stolen property, was drawn up beside the curb.

The four prisoners were brought into the room and the examination commenced.

A statement of the case, referring merely to the discovery that freight car No. 2001, of the Shore Line Railroad, which had been left at the Wexham siding consigned to a merchant of that town, had been found by the station agent to have been looted during the night by some parties unknown, who, from the tracks plainly visible about the car, had evidently carried the goods off in a large wagon, was first given by Mr. Cook.

Then Jack Merry was brought forward and told his story, which proved an entertaining one for the crowd present.

The prisoners scowled upon him during the whole time he was in the chair.

Detective Wheeler, Mr. Cook, the constable and his assistants followed in order, and when the evidence against the prisoners was all in they were asked by the justice if they had anything to say.

Owen Maguire swore that he knew nothing at all about the robbery, or that his wagon had been used to carry the stolen property from the siding at Wexham to the haunted house, and defied any one to show that he was in the scheme.

Sandy told a story full of contradictions, in which he

tried to justify his connection with the matter, but he did himself more harm than good.

The two thieves had nothing to say.

The justice decided that there wasn't sufficient evidence against Owen Maguire to justify his holding him, but the other three were committed for trial, Sandy being held as an accomplice.

The wagon-load of goods, which consisted of 200 packages of fine silk and velvet dress material, was turned over to the sheriff of the county as evidence to be used against the prisoners at their trial.

The stout detective and the freight agent shook hands with Jack when the proceedings were over, and assured him that he would hear from the railroad company in a few days.

A report of the affair was printed in the weekly village paper, which came out that afternoon, and Merry pointed it out to Daisy for her information.

To say that the girl was astonished when she read the story would be putting it quite mildly.

"Why, Jack," she said, "if it hadn't been for you they wouldn't have caught the robbers nor got back the stolen property!"

"I guess that's right," replied Merry. "At any rate, Mr. Wheeler, the railroad detective, said that I was entitled to the reward offered by the company for the recovery of the goods, and that I would get it."

"How much will you get?" she asked, interestedly.

"He said the amount was \$2,000."

"Two thousand dollars!" ejaculated Daisy, to whom such a sum seemed a fortune. "Why, Jack!"

"If I get it do you know what I'm going to do?"

"No."

"To begin with, I'm going to buy some nice, new clothes for both of us."

"For me?" cried Daisy, opening her eyes.

"Yes. There's nothing too good for you in my estimation."

"Oh, Jack! You dear, good boy!" and she threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. "I do need a new dress and a hat awfully bad."

"You shall have all you want. Then I'm going to quit Mr. Kirby and start into business for myself."

Daisy's smiles disappeared at once.

"What will I do if you go away, Jack? I'd rather not have the clothes, or anything, for I'd never take any pleasure in wearing them. I don't want you to go, Jack. I should be ever so unhappy," she added tearfully.

"Don't worry, Daisy," replied Merry, cheerfully. "I'm going to take you with me. Will you go?"

"Of course I'd go, but—but——"

"But what?"

"Mrs. Kirby wouldn't let me."

"Oh, a fig for Mrs. Kirby! This is a free country."

"No, Jack, I'm not free. The poor farm overseer signed a paper that gives the Kirbys authority over me till I'm of age. They won't let me go with you, and if I ran away they could send the constable after me and have me brought back."

"Is that so, Daisy? Well, we'll go so far away they'll never get track of either of us."

"I'm afraid we couldn't, Jack. Mrs. Kirby would beat

me dreadfully when she got me back, and Mr. Kirby would put you in prison for running off with me."

"Well, I'm not going to stay here when I get that money, and I'm not going to leave you here to be knocked around by Mrs. Kirby the way she has the habit of doing. That's all there is about it," said Jack, resolutely, turning away to attend to his regular duties.

From that moment the boy began to plan how he could manage to take Daisy away with him when he went.

But he found that he had quite a problem on his hands.

Nevertheless, with his usual grit, he determined to solve it satisfactorily.

Two days later he received a letter from the Shore Line Railroad Co., enclosing a check for \$2,000, payable to his order, and a letter of thanks signed by the general freight agent of the road.

He said nothing to Mr. Kirby about it, but at the first opportunity went to the village bank, where he was well known, and asked the cashier to collect it for him.

The cashier said he could have the money then if he wanted it, so he took it, receiving three \$500 bills, four \$100 ones, and some smaller bills.

When he got back to the roadhouse he hid the money in a corner of his trunk.

That happened to be Saturday.

Towards evening he told Mrs. Kirby that he had got some money from the railroad company, not specifying the amount, as a reward for his services, and that he wanted to take Daisy into the village and make her a present of some new clothes.

Mrs. Kirby, who was a penurious woman, and saw a chance to save money for some time by allowing Jack to spend some of his on the girl, readily consented.

So Jack and Daisy went to the village together, as happy as two turtle doves in each other's company.

Jack bought Daisy a whole lot of things besides a new ready-made dress, hat and shoes, and then he treated himself in the clothing line with equal liberality.

He also purchased two dress-suit cases, one of which was for the girl.

In fact, he used up a good part of a hundred dollars, and considered the money well spent.

When they got back to the roadhouse, Mrs. Kirby held up her hands in horror at the boy's extravagance, as she considered it, and she was rather inquisitive to know why he had bought the two suit-cases.

"Everybody has them," explained Jack, "that's why I bought one for Daisy and another for myself."

"They hain't used except when people go travelin'," replied the lady, tightening her lips, "and I don't calculate that neither you nor Daisy is goin' visitin' for a considerable time yet."

"There's no reason why they can't be used to keep things in in the house as well as when one goes traveling. Daisy hasn't got a trunk, so that suit-case will answer for one as she hasn't any too much to put in it."

"She don't need no trunk, nor suit-case, either. She's got a chest of drawers, that's good enough. You've only been and wasted your money."

"Well, as long as it's my money, Mrs. Kirby, you needn't worry. I think a good deal of Daisy, and I didn't suppose you had any objection to me spending a few dollars on her."

"I hain't no objection, but I hate to see people throw good money away. However, I s'pose I kin make use of that suit-case when I visit my sister Hepsibah."

"Sure. Daisy will loan it to you any time you go visitin'."

Mrs. Kirby was of the opinion that she'd take it when she felt disposed without going through the form of borrowing it, but she didn't say so to Jack.

That night when Daisy looked her new dress and hat over in the seclusion of her room, she felt that she was the happiest girl in the world, and that Jack was the best boy that ever lived.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN UNPLEASANT SURPRISE.

Mr. Kirby never kept his roadhouse open on Sunday, but Jack always made it a point to see that the horse trough in front was full of water so that the summer people at the hotels who went riding on the Sabbath, as many of them did, could water their horses at the trough.

Jack attended to this little duty usually after breakfast, which the Kirbys had late on Sunday morning.

On this particular Sunday Merry was standing by the trough letting the water run into it after having washed it out, when a village lad, whom he knew very well, came walking up the road with a small basket on his arm.

"Hello, Ned," cried Jack, as soon as he spied the boy, "where are you bound? Fishing off the rocks yonder, I'll bet," he added.

"That's right," replied the lad. "Don't you want to come along?"

"Not much. I get all the fishing I want during the week-days. I was out three times last week, and there was more business than fun in the trips."

"Yes, I guess so. You fish for mackerel to sell at the hotels. I s'pose you've heard the news?"

"What news?" asked Jack, in some surprise.

"Then you haven't heard?"

"Heard what?"

"That Sandy Maguire and the two thieves you helped to catch a few days ago broke out of the county jail some time last night."

"You don't mean that, do you?" ejaculated Merry, incredulously.

"I do mean it. The news is all over the village."

"And did they get away?"

"Yep. Clean off."

"How the dickens did they manage to do it?"

"Dnnno. I ain't heard no particulars."

"You're sure there's no mistake about it?"

"Yes. It's a fact all right. My dad heard it from one of the constables."

"I can hardly believe it, Ned; but as long as you say it's so, it must be."

After a short talk on the subject Ned started on again for his favorite fishing ground, while Jack ran inside to tell the news to Mr. Kirby.

He then carried the intelligence to Daisy, who was washing up the breakfast dishes in the kitchen.

"I can't understand how those chaps could have got out of the county jail," said Jack. "Prisoners are supposed

to be locked up in stout cells with several officials always on the watch. These fellows, however, worked the trick some way, and now they're at large. I dare say they'll be caught before they can get out of the State. At any rate, I hope so."

The Kirbys had dinner at one o'clock and then announced that they were going to spend the afternoon at the Stapleton farm.

They said that they did not expect to return until after dark, and that Merry and Daisy could prepare their own tea for themselves.

"Well, if Mr. Kirby thinks I'm going to hang around the house all the afternoon and watch the old place for him he's just as mistaken as if he'd lost his shirt," said Jack to Daisy after the boss of the shanty and his wife had departed in the covered buggy.

"But he expects us to, Jack," replied the girl, who was washing the dishes while Merry wiped them.

"I don't care what he expects. I'm worth money now, and I feel as independent as a hog on ice. How would you like to take a sail with me, Daisy? It's a glorious afternoon, and there's a dandy breeze blowing."

"I'd like to go very much, Jack," replied the girl, with a pleased look; "but I'm afraid Mr. and Mrs. Kirby wouldn't like it if we left the house alone."

"Ho! Don't you worry about them. We'll soon be away from their authority, or I'm no prophet."

As matters turned out their stay with the Kirbys was much shorter than even Jack's most sanguine plans contemplated.

"Well, are you going with me?" asked Jack, after the last dish was put away.

"Ye-es," replied Daisy, in a wistful, but hesitating way.

"All right," replied Merry, "get your hat and we'll go."

He went to his own room, dived down into his trunk and brought up his money.

He wasn't going to leave that behind him in the road-house for fear some thief might break into the place while they were away and go through his trunk.

He knew that the Kirbys were in the habit of taking their money with them wherever they went, and decided that their example was a good one to follow, especially as he had so large a sum in his possession.

So he took the money and pinned it securely to his pocket.

Being thus assured of its safety, he started with Daisy for the little boat landing where the Kirby sailboat was moored.

Jack was a first-class boatman, and Daisy felt perfectly safe with him.

They sailed away for the mouth of the harbor in great spirits, under the influence of a spanking breeze that sent the boat along at a lively rate.

"Well, Daisy, where shall we go now?" asked Jack, after they had gotten well out in the offing. "Are you game to go as far as those islands yonder—the Three Sisters, as they are called?"

"I will go anywhere you wish to take me, dear Jack," replied the girl, confidently, smiling up into his face.

"Then you aren't afraid to venture out so far from shore?"

"Not with you, Jack."

"Well, I wouldn't take you if I thought there was any danger. We won't be able to get back before sundown, but that will be some time before the Kirbys return. They needn't know we've been off anyway. I'm not going to volunteer the information, and I don't imagine you will, so this will be where we steal the march on them," chuckled Merry.

He laid the boat's course for the three islands that lay out on the sparkling bosom of the sea like three gorgeous emeralds.

The further they drew away from the shore the more delighted Daisy was with the sail.

It was a rare treat for her, because the opportunity was seldom afforded her.

"It's nice to be rich, don't you think, Daisy? Just think how those summer visitors at the hotels here enjoy life. Nothing to do but to eat, drink and be merry all the live-long day. Maybe some day you'll marry a rich young fellow, and then you'll be able to do the grand yourself at a summer resort."

"No, Jack, that will never happen," replied Daisy, shaking her head.

"Why not? How can you tell what the future may bring forth? I might get rich and marry you myself for all you can tell, that is, if you liked me well enough."

"I'll never like any one else but you, Jack," she said, simply.

"How do you know you won't? If you saw some of those dudes at the hotels you'd fall head over heels in love with them right away. They've got more style in five minutes than I have in six months. And it's the style that catches the girls, too."

"You're good enough for me," she answered, laying her head on his shoulder.

"That's because you haven't seen any one better in your estimation. However, you're a good little girl, Daisy, and whoever marries you will get a prize."

"You will always be my brother, Jack, won't you, even if you find a girl you like better than me?"

"Sure, I will, but I don't think I will ever like any other girl better than you. I hope not, at any rate."

"So do I, because—because I don't want any girl to take you away from me," and she hid her face in her hands.

"Oh, come now, what's the matter with you? You aren't crying, are you?"

"No, I'm not—oh, Jack, it would break my heart if—"

"If what?"

"If—I—lost you," with a sob.

"I'm afraid I'll have to marry you, after all, Daisy, some day, just to keep you from losing me, and to keep me from losing you, for I don't believe I could get along without you. I'd feel lonesome, that's why, when I leave the Kirbys, as I'm going to-morrow soon, I shall carry you off with me, even if I have to steal you."

"I don't care if you do run off with me, if Mr. and Mrs. Kirby are never able to find me," she said, with a wistful smile.

"They won't find either of us, you can gamble on that. After we get out of the State they will have a sweet time getting us back. Well, here we are now, getting close to the islands. I often fish around here, generally on the seaward

side. You ought to see how the mackerel bite when you float into a school of them. You can't haul them in quick enough. But they're a mighty skittish fish. They'll take alarm at most anything, and then, quick as a flash, they're gone, though a moment before millions of them were skipping about you in every direction."

"I wish I could come out with you some day and see you catch them."

"I'd like to have you, but Mrs. Kirby wouldn't stand for it."

Daisy knew that was true, and didn't say anything more till Jack ran the sailboat into a small cove and told her he guessed they had time to go ashore for a few minutes.

He stepped out, tied the boat to a rock, and helped her to land.

Then they walked off hand in hand.

They hadn't gone very far before Daisy said, pointing ahead:

"I see a big sailboat through the trees."

"You're right. We're not the only ones on the island, after all. Might be a party of those hotel dudes. They're fond of sailing around when the weather is not too rough. I've met them out here more than once, and the only thing I've got against them is that they always scare the fish and I have to change my anchorage."

As Jack wanted to show Daisy a few specimens of the hotel young men, they kept straight on.

Presently they saw smoke rising in the air.

"I'll bet those chaps are having a clam-bake, or something of that sort," said Jack. "They'd sooner eat a rough meal of their own cooking than a first-class dinner at the hotel. That's where they and I differ."

Jack and Daisy made their way toward the fire, and soon came out into an open space, surrounded by trees, near the shore.

The noise they made attracted the attention of three persons seated around the fire, above the hot coals of which several fish were sizzling in a pan.

The three in question—two men and a boy—sprang to their feet in some alarm, and were on the point of making a rush for the little sloop moored close to the beach, when they recognized the intruders.

"Why, it's that mutt, Jack Merry, and Daisy Kent," cried the voice of Sandy Maguire. "Let's nab 'em. We owe that lobster a whole lot for doin' us up. You tackle him and I'll grab the girl."

Before Jack recovered from the unpleasant surprise occasioned by this unexpected encounter, he and Daisy were in the hands of the Philistines.

CHAPTER IX.

ABOARD THE SLOOP.

"So, young feller, we've got you, have we?" exclaimed Buck Baxter, as he and his associate, Jim Larkin, got a firm grip on Merry.

At the same moment Sandy laid hold of Daisy, but the girl this time mustered up enough courage to give him a swinging slap in the face.

"Wow!" cried Sandy, angrily. "What do you mean by hittin' me, you little wildcat?"

Jack tried to break away from the escaped crooks, but failed.

They tripped him up and sat upon him.

"You hold him, Jim, till I get a rope to tie him with," said Baxter, starting for the sloop.

Larkin had his hands full doing it, but as he was stronger and bigger than Jack, he managed to hold his own.

"Let me alone, you hateful boy!" cried Daisy, trying to get away from Sandy, but she had no more luck than Merry.

"Don't you wish I would?" chuckled Sandy. "Now I'm goin' to kiss you," and he did in spite of her screams and resistance.

That made Jack furious, and he kept Larkin on the jump trying to hold him down.

Finally Baxter got back with a rope and between them they secured Jack so he was practically helpless.

"Leave the girl alone, you little fool," said Baxter to Sandy.

"And let her run away? Not much!" retorted young Maguire.

Baxter wasted no more words on Sandy, but went over and pushed him away from Daisy.

"Now, young lady," he said, "go and sit alongside your friend."

Daisy obeyed without a murmur.

"Look here," objected Sandy, "that's my girl, do you understand?"

"Shut up and attend to them fish if you don't want me to knock daylight into you," roared Baxter, in a threatening way.

Sandy subsided and went to the pan in a discontented way.

"That kid is altogether too flippy," growled Baxter to his companion. "We ought to have left him behind."

"Give him a bat in the jaw, and that'll take some of the conceit out of him," said Larkin.

"That's what I'll have to do if he gives us any more trouble. Let's have a look at the fish. I'm nearly starved. After we have a bite we'll consider what we'll do to that chap who brought the pinchers on to us."

The fish were pronounced done, and so the three fell to and ate them with the ravenous appetite of people who had fasted some time against their wills.

When the bones were all picked Baxter ordered Sandy to carry the pan aboard the sloop and stay there.

He added a threat that caused Maguire to decamp in short order.

Then the two men turned their attention to Jack.

"Now, young feller, this is where we get square with you for buttin' into matters that didn't concern you," said Baxter. "What shall we do with him, Jim?"

"We might toss him into the water, for one thing, and see if he kin float ashore," suggested Larkin, with a scowl.

"No," replied Baxter, "that's goin' too far."

"How about takin' him in to Boston, and sellin' him for a few plunks to the captain of an outward-bound vessel? He'd make a good sailor," grinned Larkin, maliciously.

"We might do that. And what about the gal? We can't let her go yet awhile. She'd blow on us."

"We'll have to take her along and get rid of her in Boston in a way that wouldn't put the cops on our track. We

could put her in care of Mother Ryan, the boarding-house keeper. She could be kept a prisoner in the old lady's house, and held for ransom."

The other assented.

"That's what we'll do with them both, unless we can think of somethin' better before we reach Boston," said Larkin. "We'll have to tie the gal's hands to keep her out of mischief."

Having decided on the fate of their prisoners, Daisy's hands were tied, and then the rascals got out their pipes and commenced to smoke.

"Oh, Jack," said Daisy, in a tone of distress, "are these men going to take us away with them?"

"I'm afraid they are," replied the boy. "But keep up your courage. We'll find a way somehow to give them the slip before they will have the chance to harm either of us."

He spoke cheerfully to keep up the girl's courage, but he was by no means so confident of getting away from the rascals as he pretended.

"But what will Mrs. Kirby say when I get back? She'll give me a beating and maybe lock me up in my room for a week, like she once did."

"Don't you worry about Mrs. Kirby. If we get to Boston I don't think we need bother about the Kirbys any more. I sha'n't go back myself, and I mean to keep you with me."

Daisy made no reply.

She wasn't quite easy in her mind as to how such an arrangement would work when it was put to a test.

She stood in great terror of the lady of the Kirby household, and had an idea that Mrs. Kirby would find her out even if she went to the other end of the world.

The two rascals finished their pipes, took a look at the declining sun, which was setting behind a thin veil of haze, and then ordered the two young people to get on their feet and walk down to the shore.

Sandy was sitting on the rise of the small trunk cabin smoking a cigarette, and he looked grumpy enough to sour milk.

He had come to the conclusion that Baxter and Larkin were not the kind of men he cared to associate with.

He almost wished that he was back in jail with the chances of going to some reformatory ahead of him.

He was fully determined to break away from the men at the first good chance.

What he would do after that he didn't know.

He couldn't go back home to the farm, that was certain.

When he thought he was a safe distance from the scene of his late trouble he intended to write to his father for money, and when he got it he would go out West and see what he could do there.

The sloop lay about twenty feet from the beach.

"Here, kid, fetch the boat ashore," shouted Baxter to Sandy.

Maguire obeyed the order with no very amiable expression on his freckled face.

"Step in, you two," said Baxter to the prisoners, in a tone that compelled their compliance with the order.

The two men followed, and then Sandy pushed the boat off to the sloop with one of the oars.

"Get aboard," ordered Baxter, looking at Jack.

The boy did so, and Larkin assisted Daisy over the low side.

The prisoners were marched into the cabin and left to themselves, while Baxter, who seemed to be something of a sailor, proceeded to get the boat under weigh with the help of his companions.

Then he took charge of the tiller and laid his course, as near as he knew how, for Boston harbor.

Jack and Daisy, left to themselves, sat on a bunk on one side of the vessel.

The door of the cabin, looking forward, with its tarnished brass-bound steps leading up to the deck, had been left open, but they couldn't see anything save a kind of bulkhead beyond them.

The mainsail and jib, well reefed, had been spread to the stiff breeze, and the sloop leaned well over under the weight of the wind.

"Daisy, did they tie your hands tight?" asked Jack. "Try and see if you can work them loose."

"I'm afraid I can't, Jack," she answered.

"Try, anyway. I don't propose to give up the ship until I'm at the end of my rope. If you can free your hands I'll show you how you can get my arms loose, too."

Thus encouraged, Daisy tried her best to release herself from the rope which held her wrists together.

While she was thus engaged Sandy came down into the cabin with another cigarette in his mouth.

He stopped for a moment at the entrance and looked back, then came to where the prisoners were seated.

"Those chaps ain't goin' to do a thing to you two when they get in to Boston," he said, darkly, but without his former air of triumph.

"I s'pose you came down to crow over us," replied Jack, resentfully. "It's like you to do such a thing."

"No, I didn't. I'm dead sore on them, and I'd like to get square. They ain't treatin' me right. They kick me around as if I didn't have no feelin's. I'd stand in with you if I could see any way of doin' them up."

"You would?" replied Merry, in some surprise.

"Yes, I would. I hate 'em!"

If the tone of his voice meant anything he certainly showed no friendly feeling for the two crooks on the deck above.

Jack looked at him as if he wasn't quite sure that he could trust the young rascal who had always been his enemy.

Still Sandy appeared to be in earnest, and Merry had seen Baxter and his companion treat Maguire without much consideration.

Sandy's grouch against his tough companions apparently overshadowed his personal feelings against Merry, and he appeared to be in a humor for joining issue with the prisoners if he could do so without any great risk to himself.

"Well," said Jack, "if you're in earnest just loosen Daisy's hands."

"I dunno as I dare," replied Sandy, doubtfully. "They'd kick the stuffin' out of me if they knew I did it."

"Well, you needn't let her loose. Just ease the rope up so it won't hurt her hands so much."

Sandy consented to do this.

"If I only knew some way by which I could get square with those fellers and you could help me, I'd let you loose," said Sandy, as he eased up the rope about the girl's wrists.

"If I was free I'd find a way. I'm not afraid of either or both of them on any kind of even terms. One of them

has got to stand by the wheel in this wind. Suppose the other came down here to look at us. We could both knock him out in no time and that would leave the other chap at our mercy."

Sandy, however, didn't have pluck enough to risk a fight with either.

They had thoroughly intimidated him, and he was afraid of his life of both.

Not so Jack.

He was plucky enough to have tackled either, even at a disadvantage to himself.

At that moment Larkin stuck his head down the companionway and wanted to know what Sandy was doing in the cabin.

"Come on deck right away, you little sea cook," he roared, "or I'll give you a h'ist with my boot!"

Sandy didn't stand on the order of his going.

CHAPTER X.

CAST ASHORE.

As soon as Sandy disappeared up the steps, Jack said:

"He hasn't got spunk enough to last him over night. I'm sure if he had any backbone at all the pair of us could manage to knock those chaps out one at a time. Can you get your hands out of that rope now, Daisy?"

The girl tried and easily succeeded.

"Good," said Jack. "Now put your hand into my right trousers pocket, pull out my knife and cut the rope holding my hands."

Daisy followed his directions, and inside of a few minutes Merry was free.

By this time it was growing dark, and the wind appeared to have increased to a small gale.

The sloop was jumping over the choppy sea at a lively gait and leaning well to the leeward.

The first thing Merry did was to look around the cabin for something that might answer as a weapon, for he was determined to put up a stiff fight against the crooks.

The sloop was a small coaster that the rascals had evidently boarded in the night after their escape from the Wexham jail and put to sea in her without taking the trouble to ask the owner's permission.

Baxter seemed to be competent to handle her, but whether Larkin had any marine knowledge was a matter of doubt.

However, Boston wasn't much over 100 miles away by water, if they took the shortest course, and with fair luck they stood a good show of reaching their destination.

Jack looked through one of the lockers and found a policeman's billy under a pile of rough clothing.

"That's just the thing to lay a man out with," he said, showing it to Daisy. "Now, if one of those rascals comes down here I'll give him a taste of it."

Night gradually came on and brought with it a further increase of the wind.

"Oh, dear, I feel so ill!" said the girl, who was now white as a sheet from seasickness, which had been coming on her ever since the sloop began to roll.

"I'm dead sorry for you, Daisy. I know what you are up against, but you'll have to grin and bear it as best you can."

"Oh, Jack, Jack, I believe I'm going to die!" she moaned, after he had laid her in a bunk.

"Nonsense! You're just seasick, that's all, but it's a fierce complaint while it lasts."

There was somebody else seasick on board, too, and that was Sandy Maghire.

He was lying on the deck, between the rise of the low poop, or roof of the cabin, and the wheel behind which Baxter and Larkin were standing, groaning as if life had lost all charms for him.

As the pitching of the sloop increased he stood some danger of sliding overboard, observing which Baxter told his companion to drag him down into the cabin.

Merry was rather surprised to hear an object come rolling down the steps, land at the foot in a heap and lie there inert, all the while emitting the most dismal sounds imaginable.

It was so dark now that Jack couldn't see what it was, but he judged that it must be Sandy, for the dolorous sounds showed that it was alive.

"He's sick, too," chuckled Merry, as he steadied himself by holding on to the bunk where Daisy lay, feeling more dead than alive.

Sandy made no effort to alter his position at the foot of the steps, so Jack went over to him and, finding him all bunched up, raised him in his arms and carried him, as limp as a rag, to the other bunk, and tumbled him into it.

"It looks to me as if the weather was growing worse and worse," he said to himself. "I hope those chaps will keep the sloop right side up, for if she was to go clean over none of us would stand much of a show for our lives."

Jack climbed up the steps and looked forward.

He saw that both the jib and mainsail were double-reefed, but even that reduced canvas seemed too much for the sloop.

As a matter of fact, Baxter was aware that he was carrying too much sail under the circumstances, but he dared not leave the wheel in Larkin's charge in order to reduce it, nor was his companion competent to take it in himself, so things had to go as they were.

To make matters worse the sailor crook had lost his bearings in the darkness that shrouded the sea and overcast sky in an impenetrable gloom, and he could only trust to luck for plenty of sea room.

It happened, unfortunately, that he was driving straight on a most inhospitable stretch of the New England coast.

The wind was helping him on to destruction, too, for it was blowing dead on shore.

There was no lookout ahead whose sharp eye would probably have detected the white line of surf as it beat upon the rocks, though hardly in time to have saved the little vessel, for it would have been next to impossible to beat out to sea again from that lee shore.

Thus the sloop rushed on to her fate.

Suddenly Baxter made out the line of surf himself, and its dull roar came to his ears during a lull in the gale.

He uttered an imprecation and whirled the wheel around. As the sloop swung about the wind, swooping down on her, carried her over almost on her beam ends.

Larkin went over into the sea like a flash, and Baxter, swept from the wheel, followed him.

The wheel turned back when released from his grip and

the vessel righted herself, and was swept right in on the rocks, covered at one moment by the tumultuous waters, and then pouring down cascades from their sides as the waves receded.

It seemed as if another moment would not only seal the fate of the craft, but that of the three unconscious inmates of the little cabin.

The sudden careening of the sloop had taken Jack off his feet, and he fell alongside the locker underneath the bunk on which Daisy lay.

The girl herself was cast against the side of the cabin, while the miserable Sandy was dumped out of his berth on top of Merry.

The vessel took probably a ton of water aboard over her lee side, and when it came rushing down into the cabin, like a miniature waterfall, and set the place awash, Jack gave himself and his companions up for lost.

Surely they were foundering out in the wild sea.

But no—the sloop swept up into the wind and darted ahead again.

Jack did not know, though, that a long stretch of rocky shore lay right across her path.

A kindly Providence, however, was watching over their young lives at that moment.

There was only one spot for more than a mile up and down that coast where they had the ghost of a chance for escape—that was a chasm in the rocks dead ahead.

A great wave following the sloop lifted and flung her, straight as an arrow, right into that large cleft, the sides of which were nearly perpendicular.

Nothing else could have saved them, as, had they struck the rock outside, the little craft would have been dashed to pieces, and its fragments, with those in the cabin, have disappeared in the undertow.

As it was, the cleft was not four feet more than the width of the sloop, and as the waves hurled her up into it, the boom was thrown fore and aft with great violence, causing the mast to snap short off, the whole wreck falling across the cabin entrance, making prisoners of those below for the time being.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CHASM IN THE CLIFFS.

Jack had just pushed Sandy away from him and was staggering to his feet when the awful shock came, and he and Sandy performed a few odd circus tricks before they fetched up against the stern-post of the sloop and lay there half stunned in a foot of water.

Daisy had been tumbled all into a heap in her bunk and she lay there shivering with terror, which almost got the better of her seasickness.

She was conscious that something dreadful had happened, for the motion of the sloop had now ceased completely.

At the same time the thunder of the surf at the base of the rocks filled her ears, which, mingled with the shriek of the wind as it swept into the chasm, convinced her that her last hour had come.

Another great wave, striking the stern of the sloop, jarred the craft from stem to stern and pushed her further into the cleft.

Wave after wave succeeded, but their effect on the craft was as nothing compared with what had gone before.

As Jack pulled himself together he realized that the sloop was ashore somewhere.

He got on his feet, for the cabin was almost on a level keel, though inclined somewhat upward in the direction of her bows.

He, too, heard the roar of the surf, but the sound was only what he expected under the circumstances.

Reaching around in the darkness, he grasped Sandy by the collar and tried to raise him.

"Brace up, will you! We're on the rocks somewhere," he said to him.

"Oh, lor', let me alone," groaned Sandy, dismally. "I'm dyin' as fast as I can."

Merry hauled him out of the pool of water and then dropped him, as he was anxious to see how Daisy had come out of the crash.

He felt his way to her bunk and found her huddled up in a bunch.

"Daisy! Daisy!" he cried, shaking her by the shoulder.

"Oh, Jack, is that you?" she answered, in a weak voice, grasping him convulsively by the arm. "Don't leave me!"

"You're not hurt, are you?" he asked, with some anxiety.

"I don't know, but I'm dreadfully frightened. What has happened?"

"The sloop has gone ashore somewhere on the coast. Don't you hear the surf?"

"I hear a terrible roaring. I thought we were sinking down into the ocean."

"We are among the rocks, I'm sure, but it's funny that the waves don't seem to be beating against the vessel to any extent. Only upon the stern, and not so hard at that."

"Oh, Jack, that was a terrible crash when the vessel struck, and then something fell on the deck above. I thought the roof was caving in."

"That was the mast, I guess, which broke off. You are sure that you're not injured in any way?"

"Yes. I'm only sick and weak," she replied.

"Well, lie still till I go on deck and take a look around. Those two rascals must have been swept overboard, or on to the rocks, else they had been down here, I should think, before this."

"I hate to have you leave me, Jack," said Daisy, wistfully.

"Oh, I've got to see how things stand. It may be necessary for us to get away from the sloop as soon as possible in order to save our lives, though as far as I can make out we seem to be out of immediate danger."

He fumbled around in his pocket for his match-safe, which was practically water-tight, opened it, took out a match and struck it on the bunk.

The blue flame lighted up the cabin with a ghostly sort of glow.

There was nothing the matter with the place outside the pool of water around the sternpost.

Merry went to the companion ladder and started to reach the deck.

He soon found an obstacle in his path.

This was the canvas of the mainsail, which covered a large part of the deck.

Jack couldn't find an opening anywhere, and he found it impossible to drag the sail aside so he could get out.

There was only one thing to do, and that was to cut it, so he whipped out his jackknife and soon slit a square hole large enough to permit him to get out.

Pushing his head and shoulders through, he could dimly make out that the sloop was stuck into a chasm of a great, rocky wall, whose sides towered skyward and were lost in the darkness.

Rising higher, so that he could look over the trunk roof of the cabin, he could see ridges of white froth rolling in from the ocean, dashing themselves on the rocks and covering the sloop, himself included, with clouds of spray.

"The sloop is evidently high and fast upon the rocks," decided Jack, "and not in any immediate danger of going to pieces. We've had a most remarkable escape. I guess Baxter and his pal are out of business for good, for there's no sign of either on deck. They're probably getting all that's coming to them by this time. I don't see that the three of us can do anything better than remain in the cabin until morning. We'll be safe enough there."

When he returned to the cabin he lit another match and took a second survey of the place.

He was uncommonly well pleased to find a lantern ready for lighting hanging near the sternpost.

He took it down, lighted it and hung it up again.

This dispersed the gloom and made the cabin quite cheerful.

Then he looked at his companions.

The stoppage of the vessel showed an improvement in their conditions.

Both were fast asleep—Sandy snoring like fun.

Jack did not feel very comfortable, with his lower garments sodden and wet about his limbs, so he thought he would remedy the matter if he could.

"There must be a small galley forward under the deck. I'll go there, start a fire and dry my clothes," he thought.

He made his way to the bows over the wreckage, found and uncovered a scuttle hole, and dropping through it, discovered a narrow room, coming to a point at the heel of the bowsprit, furnished with two rude bunks, a small cooking stove and a collection of pans and other articles connected with a cooking department.

There was a supply of kindling wood and coal in a box, and so Merry presently had a bright fire burning, close to which he hung his pants and such other garments as happened to be wet.

He placed his soaked shoes under the stove, and then lay down on one of the bunks to wait till his things were dry enough to put on again.

Rolling himself up in a blanket he began to muse upon his latest adventure.

The monotonous roll of the surf and the whistling wind soon had a lulling effect upon his senses, and before long the somolent god Morpheus had him tightly clasped in his clutches.

The next thing he knew was that it was bright daylight.

"My gracious!" he exclaimed, "I must have slept several hours. Here it is morning."

He hustled into his clothes and sprang out on deck to take a good survey of the situation of the wreck.

He found the sloop in about the position he had figured

on the night before—cast into a cleft of the cliffs which at this point rose all of a hundred and fifty feet above the level of the sea.

He could not tell just what part of the coast it was they were cast away on, but judged that it was a considerable distance to the east of Boston.

Looking out through the opening of the rocky cleft, he saw that the ocean was still roughly agitated after the late gale.

Wave after wave rushed in and lashed the shore as if it meant to bore its way through under the base of the cliffs.

While he stood gazing about upon the seascape he saw Sandy Maguire's head rise through the hole in the canvas that he had cut away the night before.

The little rascal looked around in no little astonishment, and finally emerging altogether from the cabin scuttle, he approached Merry.

"Well," remarked Jack, "I see you're on deck again in two senses of the term."

"We're wrecked, aren't we?" he answered. "Where's Baxter and Larkin?"

He looked around in a way that showed he was not anxious to meet them again.

"You know as much about the matter as I do," replied Jack.

"Aren't they aboard the sloop?"

"No. They disappeared, I guess, about the time the sloop struck."

"Then they're dead?" said Sandy, in a tone of satisfaction.

"If they aren't they must have as many lives as a cat. Is Daisy awake?"

Sandy shook his head.

"Whereabouts are we?" he asked.

"Somewhere along the coast."

"What part of the coast?"

"I give it up."

"How are we goin' to get out of this hole?"

"Climb out, I should say."

"What! Climb up them tall rocks?"

"I don't see how else we're going to leave the place. If we had a balloon we might sail out, but as we haven't we'll have to get out the best way we can."

"I never could climb up there," said Sandy, with a fearful glance upward. "Can't we get out by the beach?"

"I don't see any beach in the neighborhood—nothing but foam-covered rocks."

"Oh, lor', I wish I had somethin' to eat."

"I wouldn't object to a porterhouse steak and fixings myself," grinned Jack. "Well, I'm going below to rouse Daisy out. She's slept long enough."

He found the girl just opening her eyes.

"How do you feel this morning, Daisy?" he asked.

"I feel pretty good, Jack," she replied. "Is it morning?"

"That's what it is. Tumble out and come on deck with me."

She was amazed at the sight that met her eyes when he led her up the companion ladder.

After many exclamations of astonishment she wanted to know how they were going to escape from their predicament.

Jack told her that the only way was by the cliff.

"I never can climb up there," she said.

"That's what Sandy says, but I guess you both will manage to do it."

Merry had already studied the face of the rock, and he pointed out a rough path by which he figured the ascent might be accomplished.

"I'll help you, Daisy, and I think we had better start at once, as nothing is to be gained by remaining here."

Of course the girl was willing to go anywhere that Jack went, for she had the greatest confidence in his judgment, so Merry led her off the sloop on to the rocks, and they began the risky climb together.

Sandy, not desirous of remaining alone on the wreck, followed their example with a somewhat quaking heart.

CHAPTER XII.

DR. EDWARD BRANCH.

Jack, with his arm around Daisy, gradually climbed the precipitous side of the cliff, and after a quarter of an hour of severe toil, arrived at the summit, when they sat down on a boulder to recover themselves.

Looking down, they could see Sandy, slowly and laboriously, following in their footsteps.

The sky was clear, the sun an hour high above the distant watery horizon, and the wind was blowing a six-knot breeze.

"It's my opinion, Daisy," said Merry, as he surveyed the depths below, and the expanse of troubled water beyond, "that we're just as well out of that."

The girl agreed with him, of course, and then asked in what direction they were to go.

"Straight inland, I should say," he answered. "The prospect from here of a long tramp before we strike civilization looks good. But, still you can't tell. We may run across a farm beyond that rise."

The outlook was certainly not encouraging.

On one side was the surging ocean, on all other sides a vast expanse of barren, hilly ground which formed the top of the cliffs.

By this time Sandy reached the summit and threw himself, quite exhausted, on the ground.

Jack and Daisy were ready to proceed, but waited for Maguire to recover himself.

"Come on, Sandy, brace up!" said Jack at length. "It's time we were looking for our breakfast."

The world breakfast galvanized the young rascal into action, for he was desperately hungry.

They proceeded over a flat stretch of verdureless ground and then began to descend a gentle declivity.

As they continued their walk inland they came to a road, and Jack regarded this as a favorable sign that they might shortly expect to reach a house.

They turned into it, and after proceeding for perhaps a quarter of a mile, they saw a thin whisp of smoke rising above a grove of stunted pines where the road turned off to the right.

"I guess we'll find a house beyond those trees," said Jack, hopefully. "Then we'll be able to find out where we are, and probably get something to eat."

"I don't care where we are as long as I can get somethin' to fill up on," said Sandy, licking his hungry chops in anticipation of a meal.

They hastened their steps somewhat and finally reached the turn in the road.

Here they got a better view of the surrounding landscape, and made out green fields and pastures in the distance, with plenty of trees, but no houses.

The house they had expected to find beyond the trees was not there, but, instead, they saw before them, drawn well out of the road, a kind of covered caravan, not unlike a prairie "schooner," with a pair of horses staked out on the grass, and a big dog lying beneath the wagon.

A middle-aged man of somewhat imposing appearance, attired in a curious, long dressing-gown, and a kind of Turkish smoking-cap, was bending over a fire kindled on the grass, whereon a huge coffee-pot was simmering gently.

The man was singing to himself as he broiled some pieces of bacon on a gridiron, and he made a rather odd picture in that solitary situation.

"Gee! What have we here?" ejaculated Merry, while Daisy looked her surprise.

At that moment the dog, perceiving their approach, sprang to his feet and rushed at them, barking furiously.

This attracted the man's attention, and turning partly around, he looked at them over his shoulder.

Jack didn't like the warlike attitude of the dog, who looked big and savage enough to make a meal off the three of them, so he picked up the broken limb of a tree and placed himself in a posture of defense.

A sharp whistle from the crouching man brought the animal to a growling halt, which, being followed by a word of command, caused the beast to return to his master rather unwillingly.

The young people were disappointed in not finding a house and a possible breakfast.

Sandy felt particularly downcast, for a whiff of the frying bacon reaching his nose set his appetite on such an edge that the expression on his face looked like that of a famished hyena.

"I'll have to speak to this man," said Jack. "He's a traveling quack, judging from the sign on the canvas covering the wagon. He ought to be well acquainted with the country around about."

Leaving his companions in the road, Merry advanced with some caution, for he entertained a wholesome respect for the dog.

The strange man rose to his feet, frying-pan in hand, and awaited the boy's approach with some curiosity.

His appearance was now tall, well built and somewhat commanding.

His eyes were dark and piercing, and he was smoothly shaven.

"Good-morning, sir," said Jack, politely.

"Good-morning, young man. You three young people are abroad early. I see you come from the direction of the cliffs. I wasn't aware there were any houses for many miles in that direction."

"We haven't seen any, that's why we are walking this way."

"Indeed," replied the man, eyeing Merry curiously. "May I inquire where you live?"

"Well, we have been living in the village of Barmouth, some miles down the coast, but we are making a change."

"Barmouth, eh? I know the place. I stopped there Sat-

urday. It is all of thirty miles from here. So you've been living there and you say you're on the move. Do you mean to say you have walked all the way to this point, and by the cliff road?"

"Well, hardly that. We came by a sloop as far as a chasm in the rocks along the shore, then, as the vessel was wrecked there last night, there was nothing for us to do but climb the cliff and try to find our way to the nearest town or village. Perhaps you will be so kind as to direct us. You seem to be a traveling doctor, and probably you know the lay of the land around here. It will be a great favor, as we haven't the slightest idea where we shall be able to find even a farmhouse."

The strange man appeared to be greatly interested in Jack's statement.

"If what you tell me is the truth, you appear to be in hard luck. And you have a girl with you, too. You'd better stop and have breakfast with me. I am bound for the village of Whitefield, some miles distant, and it will give me pleasure to give you a ride as far as that place, or even further, if you have no settled plans as to your destination."

"I am very much obliged to you for the invitation and promise of a ride, and we will gladly accept your hospitality if we do not put you to too much trouble."

"Don't mention such a thing, young man. I am a citizen of the world—that is, I am always on the move. The wagon represents my home and my business. My name is Dr. Edward Branch. To my intimates I am known as Doc. You may address me by the latter, but not in public. I hold a diploma from the Philadelphia College of Medicine, so you see I am not absolutely a quack, though doubtless my brother physicians would style me one, owing to the unprofessional method I am taking to relieve the various ills that flesh is heir to. I have invented a number of nostrums which I compound myself, en route, and sell at first hand among the people. It is my ambition to accumulate a sufficient fund that will enable me to locate permanently in some large town where I can start a laboratory for the manufacture and sale through the trade of my different preparations. There is a fortune in it, but it takes money to make money, and therefore I have been obliged to go slow. What is your name, young man?"

"My name is Jack Merry, sir. I am an orphan, and so is my girl companion, whose name is Daisy Kent. The boy standing in the road with her is Sandy Maguire, whose father is a farmer near Barmouth. There are good reasons why it would not be well for him to return to his home, which it is possible I may mention later. I hope, however, you will not turn him down on that account, for though he has not been a friend to Daisy and myself, we intend to stand by him for the present."

"I never meddle with matters that do not concern me, young man. Go and bring up your companions. I will have an additional supply of bacon put on the gridiron, and a fresh pot of coffee made to supply your immediate wants."

Accordingly, Jack returned to the place where Daisy and Sandy were standing, and told them that Dr. Edward Branch had invited them all to partake of his al fresco breakfast, after which he had promised them a lift as far as the village of Whitefield, or possibly further, if they wished to go on.

Sandy was in ecstasy when he heard that he stood a good chance of getting something to eat, and impatiently took the lead up to the fire.

Jack introduced his companions individually to the traveling physician, and the doctor welcomed them to such hospitality as he had to offer.

As a preliminary to the feast the doctor distributed three tin cups of hot coffee to his hungry guests, and then proceeded to make a fresh supply.

He cut some more bread and handed the already cooked bacon to Daisy and Jack.

Merry, however, said he would wait and eat with the doctor, as he knew Sandy was famished, and that it would only be adding to his torture to see the food disappear before his eyes.

Dr. Branch regarded Jack's self-denial with much favor, and instantly took a great fancy to him.

The doctor did not spare his provender, and when the meal was finished everybody had eaten as much as they wished.

Daisy volunteered to wash up the few dishes that figured in the meal, and the physician accepted her services with an encouraging smile.

He asked both Jack and the girl many questions while they were eating, and their replies had suggested a plan to his mind.

While Daisy was heating a pan of water over the replenished fire in which to wash the dishes and gridiron, and Sandy was taking solace in a cigarette, the doctor took Jack aside and laid his idea before him.

"Young man, how would you and Miss Daisy like to enter my employ for a while? I am in great need of a boy to help me compound my various remedies. The one I had took French leave about a week ago, and his loss has occasioned me considerable inconvenience, and I may say also a loss of trade, for he was an admirable singer and mimic, and always drew a crowd by his inimitable performance. Now, I could make use of Miss Daisy, I think, as a drawing card. She has a sweet and attractive face, and if she can sing at all I will be able to develop her talent in that direction to a considerable extent, and I have no doubt I shall be able to find some latent ability in yourself. By your own statement neither of you have a home or any settled plan of action as yet. I think you can't do better than take up with my proposition. I will pay you a fair wage, and your expenses will be nil. What do you say?"

Jack was taken by surprise, and for a moment remained silent.

With the sum of \$1,900 in his possession he was in a more independent position than the traveling doctor dreamed of.

At the same time Merry had no very clear idea how he would be able to utilize that money to the best advantage.

In thinking the matter over he had about concluded that the most sensible thing for him to do was to find a job first and not risk his money in any business until he had looked the field of enterprise well over and decided what he was best fitted for.

The proposal of Dr. Branch was not so bad under present circumstances, especially as it included Daisy, and would relieve him of her support, as well as his own.

Then there was novelty in it.

They would have a chance to see a bit of the world at the doctor's expense, and he could pick up a lot of experience that would be of great assistance in the future.

"I'll speak to Daisy about it," he said to the doctor. "If she's willing to go with you, and you can provide suitable accommodations for her, it is likely I'll agree to make a trial of it."

This was satisfactory to him, and so Jack broached the matter to his fair companion.

"I'm willing to go wherever you go, Jack," she said, trustfully. "I know you will protect me, and I could not bear to be separated from you."

"All right," replied Merry, and he closed arrangements with the doctor.

He then confided to the doctor the circumstances surrounding Sandy Maguire, and asked him if he would help him to escape into another State.

"I am afraid I should be breaking the law by giving assistance to an escaped prisoner," he said; "but as I am not supposed to know his true character I guess I can afford to stretch a point as a favor to you."

So it was decided to take Sandy with them for the present.

The morning was spent by the doctor in trying Daisy's voice, which he found to be admirably adapted to his purpose, and teaching her a couple of songs to the accompaniment of a banjo, in the playing of which he was an expert.

Finding that Jack was also a good singer, he arranged a duet for them, which they were to learn and practice later.

He likewise instructed Merry in a dialogue that he and the boy were to indulge in for the entertainment of a crowd after it was collected.

Daisy and the doctor prepared the noon-day meal together, and after it was eaten Jack and Sandy harnessed up the team and the doctor started on the road to Whitefield.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW DR. BRANCH DID BUSINESS.

The interior of the roomy wagon was fitted up with chests of drawers, a couple of bunks, a collapsible table, two camp chairs, a good-sized oil stove on which the doctor usually cooked his meals, though when the opportunity offered he preferred the more primitive out-door style, and also heated the ingredients used in the composition of his nostrums, a mortar and pestle, and various other things.

Daisy and Jack sat on the front seat with Dr. Branch, while Sandy was perfectly contented to ride behind with his legs dangling out and his customary cigarette in his mouth.

As they approached the village Jack advised Sandy to keep under cover during their stay in Whitefield, as a description of his person might be in the hands of the constables, who would be only too glad to arrest him and carry him back to Wexham, as they would, no doubt, make something by it.

Accordingly, as soon as they entered the main street, the young rascal became invisible, and was not seen again for some hours.

The doctor drove up in front of the postoffice and came to a halt.

A small platform was unshipped from the bottom of the wagon and placed at the rear end of the vehicle.

A piece of white canvas, on which was painted the doctor's name and the nostrums he was offering a suffering public, was placed around it so as to make an enclosed space two feet high, which the doctor, in a flowing robe and white beard and flowing wig, took possession of with a camp chair and his banjo.

He played several lively tunes in fine style, and then sang in a splendid, mellow voice a darky song, that caught the gathering crowd at once.

Jack then brought out the table, which was concealed by a black cloth covered with stars, crescents and odd hieroglyphics in gold, on which was a mahogany box containing samples of his stock-in-trade.

Jack was dressed in the oriental garments of his predecessor, which set off his good looks so well as to cause a flutter among the village girls who came that way.

"Hear ye! Hear ye! Hear ye! I am the renowned and only Dr. Edward Branch, late physician extraordinary to the Sultan of all the Turkies, now making a tour of the United States of America on a mission of benevolence to the people at large," began the doctor, following with much more to the same effect.

Then he proceeded to call attention to the various remedies he had for sale at the low price of twenty-five cents a bottle or box, but which, he assured his audience, were compounded of such rare and valuable ingredients, only to be found in the wilds of Thibet, Hindostan and Chinese Tartary, and which he had brought to America with him, as to be absolutely and without contradiction worth their weight in solid gold.

The doctor succeeded in disposing of several dollars' worth of his stuff, and finding that the crowd was thinning out, he brought Daisy out and exhibited her to the admiring passers-by.

Sitting within the wagon he began an accompaniment and the girl sang one of her songs with such effect as to attract a fresh crowd.

Then the doctor went outside, and making a new harangue, sold a couple more dollars' worth of his medicines.

It happened that a chap on his way to the dentist's came by with his jaw in a sling.

The doctor spied him at once.

"Have you the toothache, my friend?" he inquired.

The young fellow admitted that he had a corker.

"And you are going to the dentist's, I suppose?" continued the doctor.

The young man said he was, but wished he wasn't.

"Come here, and permit me to examine your tooth. I will stop your toothache so quick that you won't know you ever had one. My infallible toothache remedy is a wonder in its way, and I sha'n't charge you a cent for the demonstration. If I do not cure you instantly in the presence of these intelligent citizens of Whitefield, I will admit that there is something wrong with my method."

The doctor took a bottle of his stuff, a piece of cotton in his fingers, and jumped to the ground.

The patient looked nervous and declared he was suffering great pain.

"I hope you won't hurt me," he said.

"There's no such word as hurt in my dictionary," said the doctor.

The crowd looked on with intense interest while Dr. Branch applied the saturated piece of cotton to the aching molar.

The young chap happened to be well known in town and this fact added to the expectation of the multitude.

"Now, press your jaws together and hold them so for one minute," said the doctor.

The patient did so, with a convulsion of the face.

Inside of fifteen seconds the pain began to abate and in exactly one minute his toothache was gone.

He threw up his hat with a cry of satisfaction, and the crowd voiced its approval.

"Here's a dollar for curing my tooth," said the grateful chap.

"Not a penny," replied the doctor, waving the money away. "You may buy a bottle of the remedy for a quarter, or five bottles for the dollar to distribute among your friends, if you wish, otherwise you are welcome to the cure."

"Give me five bottles," said the young man, eagerly.

"Full directions for applying it are on the bottles," said the doctor, handing over the five phials.

Almost everybody in the crowd wanted a bottle now, and Dr. Branch did a land-office business in the remedy for the next fifteen minutes, for the news of the astonishing cure spread up and down the street with great rapidity, and brought many customers who would not otherwise have joined the crowd.

The wagon remained in front of the postoffice all the afternoon, the doctor drawing a fresh crowd at intervals, and he added a good many dollars to his exchequer before he pulled up stakes.

He afterwards stopped at a general store and at a butcher's and laid in a good supply of food for himself and his people, after which they left town by the main turnpike.

This was the signal for Sandy to reappear once more at the rear of the wagon.

Daisy took charge of the culinary operations, and at sundown announced that supper was ready.

It was laid out on the folding table, but everybody had to take his plate in his lap to eat, though there was room for the coffee cups on the table.

The horses and dog were fed liberally, and then the wagon went on a short distance further till they sighted a farmhouse.

Taking Daisy by the hand, Jack, with the doctor's instructions, marched up to the house and asked to hire a night's lodging for the girl.

He readily obtained it for her and, after paying fifty cents to the lady of the house, returned to the wagon, which was drawn up in the adjacent lane.

The horses were tied to a large oak tree, and the dog, which had already made friends with Jack and Daisy, but regarded Sandy with suspicion, curled himself up under the wagon and went to sleep.

Jack found the doctor and Sandy playing dominoes when he got back, and took a hand at the game himself.

At ten o'clock the proprietor of the vehicle declared it was time to turn in.

To Jack was allotted the bunk formerly occupied by his

predecessor, and Sandy made his bed near the rear of the wagon on a couple of blankets.

Before turning in Merry was told to see that the lanterns hanging at the front and rear of the wagon were all right.

He found they were, and also that the night was a fine one, and likely to remain so.

Apparently there was nothing to disturb the trio but the usual nocturnal sounds of a summer night in the country, and they were soon asleep, as was also Daisy, long before that, in a snug little bed at the farmhouse.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH JACK AND DAISY MAKE A SUDDEN CHANGE OF BASE.

Jack was the first up next morning soon after sunrise.

He took down the lamps and then looked after the horses, giving them a rubbing-down and providing them with food and water.

By that time Sandy tumbled out, but there was nothing particular for him to do.

Dr. Branch appeared at six o'clock and gave Sandy a job with the pestle and mortar, which he thought great fun at first, but soon wearied of.

"The run on the toothache remedy yesterday cleaned my stock out," said the doctor to Jack, "so we'll have to make another supply this morning before we go on to Windsor, the next village on our route. As it is more than probable that Daisy will get her breakfast at the farmhouse we had better get ours right away. Keep your companion, Sandy, at the mortar, so that I'll be able to get the toothache drops started immediately after breakfast."

So Jack made Sandy get a move on, while the doctor was preparing the meal, though the young rascal protested that he had a sore arm.

"What made it sore? There wasn't anything the matter with it when you first started in," said Jack.

"I didn't know it was sore then," growled Sandy.

"Well, the doctor says you've got to do something for your board and lodging, and for your transportation. You wasn't asked to do a thing yesterday. If you make a kick now he's liable to leave you behind at the next village, and in that case you'll have something of a job getting out of the State."

His words scared Sandy, who didn't want to be left behind, so he got busy, with many grimaces, and finished the job by the time breakfast was ready.

Dr. Branch sent Jack to the farmhouse to buy some milk and to fetch Daisy.

He found her at the breakfast table.

She had made herself so exceedingly popular with the family that they didn't want to lose her in a hurry.

So Jack got the milk, and a number of other things which were pressed upon him, for nothing, and came back without the girl.

The whole of the morning was passed in manufacturing a good supply of the toothache remedy and bottling it.

Sandy was employed in pasting the labels on and wrapping it up in pink slips of paper.

Daisy turned up in time to prepare dinner, and after it was eaten the horses were hitched to the wagon again and they started on for Windsor.

They reached that village at half-past one, and the scenes of the preceding afternoon were re-enacted.

In this manner they proceeded for several days and were gradually approaching the State line by short stages, when something happened that gave Jack and Daisy a rude jar for the time being, and led to the severance of Sandy Maguire's relations with Dr. Branch's caravan.

They had entered the town of Cornish, and the doctor was doing business in front of the postoffice, as usual, when Jack, who was circulating bills of Dr. Branch's preparations in the crowd, noticed a man on the edge of the gathering who quite took his breath away.

This man, who had just joined the crowd, and was gazing eagerly at the platform where Daisy was singing one of her songs, was no other than Cyrus Kirby.

"Gee!" breathed Jack, watching him with all eyes. "He got a clue to us somehow and has followed the wagon to this place. Now that he's seen Daisy, and is sure we are with the doctor, he'll get an officer and have us arrested. Even if he doesn't bother with me he'll assert his authority over Daisy, and take her back to Barmouth, and I'll have to follow, for I never mean to desert her. Something must be done to thwart his intentions. Perhaps the doctor will be able to advise me. Whatever we do must be done quickly, or the game will be in his hands."

Just then Daisy finished her song, amid loud applause, and retired into the wagon, kissing her hands to the crowd.

Jack saw Cyrus detach himself from the gathering and start off down the street at a lively rate.

"He's gone for a policeman and will be back shortly, prepared to enforce his claim. I must get busy."

The doctor was on the platform haranguing the people.

Jack rushed to the front of the wagon, mounted to the dashboard, stepped quickly into the wagon and told Daisy to put on her hat.

She looked surprised.

"I've just seen Mr. Kirby," he whispered in her ear. "He was in the crowd outside watching you while you were singing. He's gone for an officer, I'm sure, to force you to go away with him."

"Oh, Jack!" cried the girl, turning white. "What shall I do?"

"You must come with me at once. I'll outwit him by carrying you off myself before he gets back. The Kirbys shall never get you in their clutches again if I can help it, you may depend on that."

Daisy began putting on her hat in a flutter of apprehension and excitement, while Jack rushed to the rear of the wagon and interrupted the doctor at his business.

"I want to see you a moment on a very important matter. It is urgent," said the boy.

Dr. Branch saw by the expression of Merry's face and his perturbed manner that something was up, and he stepped back into the wagon at once.

"What's the trouble?" he inquired.

"Daisy and I have got to leave you for a while, at least," said Jack.

"Leave me!" exclaimed the doctor, aghast.

"Yes. Mr. Kirby was in the crowd just now and spotted Daisy while she was singing. Somebody must have put him on to the fact that she and I are with you, and he's followed the wagon to make sure. As soon as Daisy retired he

started off hot-foot, and I'll bet he's gone for an officer. Well, we mustn't be here when he gets back. I'm going to take her out of town right away. Whereabouts in New Hampshire shall we rejoin you?"

Dr. Branch was surprised and put out by the state of matters, but he recognized the necessity of an immediate change of base on the part of Jack and Daisy.

"You'll need money to travel and for your expenses for a few days," he said, drawing several bills from his pocket. "Here, take these. It's fortunate that this town is on the railroad. Go to the station and buy tickets for Rochester, New Hampshire. When you reach that town take the northern division of the Boston & Maine for Wakefield. Put up at the Wakefield House and wait there till I call for you."

"All right," replied Jack. "Good-by till I see you again. So long, Sandy, I'll see you later."

"Where are you and Daisy goin'?" asked Maguire, who had not heard the conversation between the doctor and Merry, for it had been carried on in a low tone.

"We're going out of town on business," replied Jack. "Come, Daisy."

He helped her down to the sidewalk and they started up the street at a quick pace, while the doctor resumed business with the crowd, which had thinned somewhat during his absence.

Hardly had they turned the nearest corner when Cyrus Kirby and a policeman put in their appearance before the wagon.

Without paying any attention to Dr. Branch, they mounted the dashboard, and Kirby, pulling the canvas front aside, looked in.

The only occupant of the interior was Sandy Maguire, who was seated on a camp stool smoking a cigarette.

Kirby didn't recognize him at first, and not seeing Daisy, he stepped over the seat and entered the wagon to investigate.

Sandy looked up, and when he saw Mr. Kirby, he started up in dismay.

Then Mr. Kirby knew him.

"What, you here?" exclaimed the roadhouse man, in great surprise.

"Don't have me arrested, Mr. Kirby," whined Sandy. "You're after Daisy and Jack, ain't you? Well, they just left the wagon in a hurry, and Jack said they were goin' out of town on business."

"Which way did they go?" demanded Mr. Kirby, impatiently.

"Dunno. I didn't take notice," replied Sandy, in shaky tones.

"How long have they been gone?"

"About five minutes."

"Did they go to the station?"

"I guess they did," answered Sandy, hoping to get rid of Mr. Kirby so that he could get a chance to light out.

"Officer," said Mr. Kirby, "do you know when the next train that stops at this town is due at the station?"

The policeman looked at his watch.

"There's an accommodation for Boston, stopping at all way stations, that is due in eight minutes."

"All right, I must leave you and try to intercept it, for I believe the girl and boy I came after are on their way to catch it. In the meantime you can arrest this young rascal

here, and take him to the station house. His name is Sandy Maguire. He escaped from the Wexham jail Sunday morning with two professional crooks."

Mr. Kirby sprang out of the wagon and started in a hurry for the station.

The policeman stepped into the wagon and told Sandy he'd have to go with him.

The young rascal threw up the sponge and yielded as meek as a lamb.

When Dr. Branch re-entered the wagon a few minutes later he missed Sandy, and wondered where he'd gone to, for the doctor intended to press him into service in Merry's place.

Thinking he might be out in front, he went forward and looked around.

There was no sign of him until the doctor casually glanced down the street.

Then the mystery of his absence was explained.

A policeman holding him by the collar was marching him off.

Then Dr. Branch realized, with some vexation, that he was once more thrown on his own resources.

CHAPTER XV.

MAKING A MAN OF HIMSELF.

The train was just pulling in when Jack and Daisy arrived at the station.

Merry had barely time in which to buy two tickets for Rochester and rush across the platform with the girl to the nearest coach when the conductor gave the signal to the engineer to go ahead.

As the cars gathered headway Cyrus Kirby ran into the station, too late to cut off the young people.

Jack, looking out at the window, saw him making inquiries among the porters and others, and finally stand and look after the train.

"That's where he got left, Daisy," chuckled Merry to his companion, "though we only got the turn on him by the skin of our teeth."

"Do you think we are safe now, Jack?" she asked anxiously.

"We won't be safe till we get out of the State. If he followed and caught us in New Hampshire he'd have to secure a requisition from the governor before he could make us go back, though he could have us arrested and detained all right."

"Oh, Jack, I was afraid there'd be a lot of trouble if I ran away from the Kirbys."

"You didn't run away from them. Neither did I. We were carried off by those rascals against our will."

"But we might have gone back after we got ashore."

"Why, are you sorry that we didn't?"

"No-o; but if Mr. Kirby catches us——"

"He's not going to catch us, so don't worry."

As the cars sped on Jack began to consider the chances of Mr. Kirby telegraphing to the next town and having Daisy and himself arrested on the train.

That was something he had not counted on before, and which had not occurred to Dr. Branch.

The more Jack considered the matter the more he

thought that it would be the part of wisdom to provide against such a contingency.

It was more than likely that Mr. Kirby would adopt such a course.

He had the law on his side, and would have no difficulty in carrying out such a plan.

"Let's go into the last car, Daisy," said Merry, suddenly.

The girl had no objection, and they went, taking seats near the rear door.

The next stopping place was Fairfield, twelve miles from Windsor.

When the train began to slack up at this place Jack went out on the rear platform and looked ahead.

He saw quite a number of people on the station platform.

To be on the safe side he decided to leave the train with Daisy on the off side of the car and wait over for another train.

Accordingly, as soon as the cars came to a stop he hurried the girl off and walked her up a shady street that lay before them.

The train remained several minutes at the station, which rather confirmed Jack's notion that officers were searching the cars for them.

"Well, they won't find us," he chuckled, as they turned into the next street.

They walked around for an hour or more and then returned to the vicinity of the station.

Leaving Daisy at the end of the platform, Merry sauntered into the waiting-room and looked at the time-table.

He found that another train bound westward stopped there at 8:10 p. m.

Returning to the girl, they went to a restaurant and had their supper, after which they walked back to the station again.

The train came in on time, they boarded the last car and duly arrived at Rochester in thirty minutes.

Fifteen minutes later they were speeding northward toward Wakefield.

They reached that town at a little after nine, took a 'bus for the Wakefield House, where Jack registered as John Merry and sister, and they were given adjoining rooms.

Here they remained undisturbed for two days, when Dr. Branch appeared and they rejoined the wagon, with much satisfaction.

The doctor told Jack that Sandy Maguire had been arrested at Windsor about the time he and Daisy left the wagon.

"Did you see Mr. Kirby?" asked Merry.

"No," replied Dr. Branch, "nor I wasn't aware of Maguire's arrest until after the policeman took him out of the wagon and was marching him down the street. I was busy with the crowd in front, trying to hold them, and did not know what happened inside the caravan."

Jack told the doctor how he and Daisy had left the train at Fairfield for fear that Mr. Kirby might have telegraphed ahead to have them taken off and detained pending his arrival.

"That was a clever move on your part," replied Dr. Branch, admiringly. "If he did that, which is not unlikely, you outwitted him and saved yourselves."

From Wakefield the wagon moved north from town to town and village to village for several weeks, and then when

the doctor thought he had gone far enough in that direction they moved westward and returned south by a different route.

Jack and Daisy proved to be of great service to Dr. Branch, and they were such nice young persons that the physician became quite attached to them.

Daisy improved greatly in her singing and made a hit everywhere along the route.

Jack also proved a winning card, and frequently harangued the crowds and sold the doctor's nostrums alternately with the proprietor of the caravan.

He also got to be quite expert in helping Dr. Branch concoct his various preparations, which Daisy labeled and wrapped up ready for sale.

The young people liked the free and easy life they were leading, and things went on swimmingly with them and the doctor, until the outfit reached Springfield, Mass., late in the fall.

Here the doctor went into winter quarters at a small house he owned, presided over by his widowed sister.

Jack and Daisy were easily persuaded to remain with him during the winter, free of all expense, with the understanding that they were to continue with the caravan when the weather permitted a resumption of the tour.

As soon as the wagon and horses were stabled Dr. Branch resumed his proper name of Dr. William Smith, and hung out his shingle in one of the windows of his house.

Jack, having found that their new friend was a man of honor, confided to him the fact that he was worth \$1,900.

The doctor was greatly surprised and not a little pleased.

He had a long talk with the boy and asked him if he would like to go into partnership with him in the manufacture and sale of his preparations, the arrangement to go into effect at the close of their next tour.

Jack said he thought he would.

"There's a fortune in it, my boy," said Dr. Smith. "You can put your money and services in and I will give you a third interest in the business. I will also make a will providing that in the event of my death after we get started you shall have a controlling interest in the business, the balance to go to my sister, and a small share to Daisy, whom I look upon almost as a daughter."

Of course this arrangement was perfectly satisfactory to Jack, and it was carried into effect at the close of their next traveling campaign, which proved to be the most successful one the doctor ever undertook.

During the next winter a laboratory was started in Springfield under the name of the Smith Pharmaceutical Co., and all of Dr. Edward Branch's preparations were put on the market.

The doctor, however, decided not to give up his tours.

Leaving Jack in charge of the business, a position he proved well qualified to assume, the physician, with Daisy and another assistant, started out in a brand new and enlarged caravan and toured New York State for seven months, doing a large business.

Nothing was manufactured en route as of old, Jack sending on supplies by express at intervals as per the doctor's requisitions.

Dr. Smith made it an important point to thoroughly advertise his preparations by distributing printed matter en route, and putting up signs and posters by the wayside that

remained for the instruction of the passer-by long after the doctor returned to Springfield.

The success of the medicines was so great that Jack had been obliged to hire several assistants, and take fresh quarters in the city.

By this time Daisy Kent had developed into a still more lovely girl of seventeen, and Dr. Smith had become exceedingly fond of her, and she of him.

The affection between her and Jack, now a fine-looking young fellow of nineteen, had ripened into real love that was stronger than that between brother and sister, and Jack one day asked her to become his wife.

She had only one answer for the plucky boy who had stood by her when she needed a protector the worst way, and that was a favorable one.

Finally Dr. Smith incorporated the pharmaceutical company.

It was a close corporation, of course, the doctor holding 40 shares, his sister 15 shares, Jack 35 shares, and Daisy 10 shares.

The dividends, declared semi-annually, were very satisfactory to all concerned, and the business continued to grow from month to month.

To-day the Dr. Branch preparations are known all over the United States, and are sold in every drug-store of any importance.

Jack Merry is general manager of the business, which occupies six floors of a large building in Springfield, and where several hundred people are employed in the different departments.

Dr. Smith is the president and general adviser of the company, but has very little to do with the conduct of the great business, which is solely looked after by Jack himself, in an elegant office on the second floor.

Over his desk hangs a picture of Daisy, as she looked when they returned from that memorable first trip to Maine.

In the parlor of his home hangs a splendid oil painting of Daisy as she looks to-day, as his happy wife and the mother of three charming children.

In the public room of a roadhouse way down in Maine hangs a handsome calendar advertising the Branch preparations, but neither Cyrus Kirby, the proprietor, nor his wife know that the man behind that company is the boy who used to be his boy of all work—a lad who, through pure grit and business sagacity, made A MAN OF HIMSELF.

THE END.

Read "A GOLDEN SHOWER; OR, THE BOY BROKER OF WALL STREET," which will be the next number (112) of "Fame and Fortune Weekly."

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GOOD STORIES.

The expression, "a tempest in a teapot," is one of great antiquity. Its first historic appearance is in the "*De Legibus*" of Cicero, who quotes it as a common saying, "Gratidius raised a tempest in a ladle," as the saying is. The French form, "*Une tempete dans une verre d'eau*" (a tempest in a glass of water), was first applied to the disturbances in the Geneva Republic near the end of the seventeenth century.

In England the word "teapot" was substituted for the sake of alliteration. It is said to have been popularized by Lord North, who employed it to characterize the outbreak of the American colonists against the tax on tea.

When Commander Peary went on his first trip in search of the Pole, he won the gratitude of an Esquimaux by presenting him with an ancient Prince Albert coat and an extensively creased sombrero. Years afterward, when again in the North, the explorer received a ceremonial visit from a native, and, to his surprise, set eyes once more on the discarded vestments.

On the occasion of the Commander's latest dash for the Pole, the aborigines took him aside and pointed to a rude mausoleum. By its side stood the disused sledge. Its six dogs had been strangled, to make an appropriate funeral. On the pile of stones lay what was left of the Prince Albert coat and the sombrero.

One of Colorado's greatest curiosities is the petrified stump of a gigantic redwood tree. This stump, which is in an almost perfect state of petrification, is located at Florissant, not far from the great gold-producing regions of Cripple Creek, Colorado. Although ever since the first exploration of Colorado numberless people have taken specimens from this stump, aggregating many tons, it is still estimated to weigh forty-four tons. To give a better idea of its size, it may be well to state that it is 20 feet in diameter and 10 feet high. There have been many attempts to dig it up and place it on exhibition, the last being a scheme to exhibit it at the great Exposition at St. Louis in 1904. Owing to its great weight, however, this had to be abandoned, and it still lies half-buried in the ground at Florissant, as there are no railway cars capable of carrying anything near its weight. What perhaps makes it more of a curiosity is the fact that this Rocky Mountain region is a country of small trees, and that there are no giant redwoods within a thousand miles of this stump—which goes to show that nature has changed the entire vegetable growth of this section, as nothing requiring the semi-tropical heat of a redwood tree would grow at this altitude now.

Samuel Seager, of Bolivar, N. Y., has a tame crow, named Jim, that can talk as plainly as some parrots. Jim is only sixteen months old, but few children of that age can excel him in making remarks. Jim was caught in a hollow tree

on top of a hill near Bolivar. With him was his sister, and both of them were sold into bondage. Mr. Seager bought Jim. Now he is so tame that he sits on the piano and criticises when Mr. Seager's daughter plays coon songs. Every one who knows him wishes he could meet Ernest Thompson Seton.

The crow first began to talk last winter. He started in by calling "Dad" and "Boo-booh." Later "papa" and "mamma" were distinctly made out. Now he has advanced so far that when Mr. Seager asks him if he wants his breakfast Jim replies, "Well, I should smile." He also says, quite distinctly, "Good-morning" and "Good-night." He will fly straight to a person who asks him if he wants his head scratched, if the person has been formally introduced to him, otherwise Jim will cut him dead. He is an impersonator, and can make any schoolboy answer his whistle.

With which eye do you wink? This is a question which Sir James Crichton-Browne, of London, has asked in a circular sent out to many hundred persons, in an effort to learn whether ambidexterity is prevalent. Sir James announced, the other day, that about 60 per cent. of the replies were from persons who can wink with the left eye only, 30 per cent. from those who can wink with either eye, and 9 per cent. from those who cannot wink at all. This is printed purely as a matter of scientific information, for it is written that "a naughty person . . . winketh with his eyes."

JOKES AND JESTS.

"Well," demanded the stern-visaged woman at the back door, "what do you want?" "Why," replied the tramp, "I seen you advertised 'table board' in dis mornin's papers—" "Well?" "Well, I t'ought mebbe yer wuz givin' out some samples."

Sam, a negro servant of a Harrisburg family, is very ambitious to appear well informed on all subjects. His master had installed electric lights throughout the house and was explaining the workings of the fluid to Sam as follows: "You see, the whole thing comes from the dynamo and goes into the wires, and then into the lights. Now, do you understand?" "Yes, sah," said Sam. "I understand all 'bout dem dynamos and other things, but what I wants to know is how do the kerosene squirt throo dem wicks?"

When the train that conveyed President Roosevelt through Virginia on his last trip South stopped at Charlottesville a negro approached the President's car and passed aboard a big basketful of fine fruit, to which was attached the card of a prominent grower. In course of time the orchardist received a letter of acknowledgment from the White House expressing the President's appreciation of the gift and complimenting the donor upon his fruit. The recipient of the letter was, of course, greatly pleased, and feeling sure that his head gardener would be much interested in the letter, he read it to him. The darky who served in the capacity mentioned listened gravely, but his only comment was: "He doan' say nuthin' 'bout sendin' back de basket, do he?"

"And you are proud of the dragon as your national emblem?" said the Orientalist. "Immensely proud of it," answered the learned Chinaman. "It shows that, as in everything else, our country was centuries ahead of the rest of the world in nature faking."

Mr. Fastset (with Extra!!!)—"Sensational elopement!" Well, what do you think of that? Young Galey has run off with his father's stenographer! Mrs. Fastset—Heavens! Why, it'll break the poor old man's heart. Mr. Fastset—Oh, I don't know. There are just as pretty stenographers in the employment agency as ever were hired.

A DEATH DIVE

OR, A SWIM FOR LIFE

By D. W. Stevens.

"Like a sheer, dead hulk, sir!" roared the old quartermaster at the wheel, in answer to the first lieutenant's query as to how the frigate headed.

She was the big American ship, the *Guerriere*. For just ten seconds all her canvas, even to her royals, rattled, and her long yards sent forth a sort of ghostly break. Then she lay in a dead calm—there off the Central Archipelago, Pacific Ocean, with an island and rocks a mile ahead of her.

She was directly on the line, and, of course, it was stifling hot weather there. Most of the jacks had their shoes off, and the decks and rigging almost blistered their feet.

At the quartermaster's remark one of the boatswain's mates—a dark, evil-looking fellow, with a cast in his eye—muttered to himself, unheard by those about him:

"Something besides the frigate will be a dead hulk 'fore long, if I have the chance I hope for to carry out my plan."

Black and full of hatred was the sidelong gaze which he directed toward the handsome first lieutenant, Mr. Jack Winthrop, as he spoke.

"Ay!" he continued, as a beautiful young girl, the daughter of Lieutenant Hall, of the marines, now standing near the starboard quarter-rail, directed a soft, shy glance at the young first officer, "look your last upon him! There will be no wedding aboard here between you and him when the ship reaches Java.

"Down—down—fathoms down at the bottom of the ocean, the mermaids—if there are such creatures—shall claim him for their own, and weave his shroud of green sea plants and weeds! Curses upon him! He will have me broken, will he, and put into the after-guard—me, Ben Wright, simply because I flogged that rascal, Tom Dalton, so hard with the 'cat' as to nearly drive the breath out of his body! He deserved it for striking me. Never could I forget the blow he gave me. True, I called him hard names—insulted him, perhaps, for spilling the drops of tar on my brand-new jacket hanging up there on the fore-stay to dry. Well, he ought to have been insulted for so lubberly a trick. He said it was an accident, but I believe it was done a-purpose, I do. The rules is against a common sailor's raisin' a hand to strike his superior officer, and so he was tied up and I did the floggin' accordin' to duty. I had a right, when I thought of my jacket and the blow he struck me, to use the 'cat' with more'n usual vim. But along comes that, first luff, Jack Winthrop, and blows me up like—for layin' on so hard, and I know that he's a-goin' to have me broke, if he can. We'll see about that!" he added, fumbling at something round in the breast pocket of his shirt.

This was a slungshot—a rough piece of lead, with a network woven about it, and a lanyard attached.

Suddenly all the young fellows in the tops, and some of the little midshipmen lounging about the decks, pricked up their ears, while a triumphant smile lighted up the dark visage of Ben Wright.

Mr. Winthrop went up to the captain, saluted, and said: "Some of us have been talking about a swim, sir. With your permission, we would like to go in the water to cool off."

"Oh, certainly, sir, certainly," answered Captain Smith, good-naturedly.

The fore-castle men and others crowded around the boatswain. His mates also appealed to him.

It was all about the swimming, and aft went the boatswain to the captain, to soon return with the required permission for the watch to take an "ocean bath."

The booms were rigged out forward, with a netting, for the accommodation of the playful youngsters who would like

to frolic in and out of the water, and the seamen all got ready for their swim.

Lieut. Winthrop, or Lieut. Jack, as he was usually termed by the men, was a bold, daring swimmer.

Ben Wright, as he swam to and fro, kept his evil eyes upon him. Concealed under his waistband he carried a life-belt to save him in case of a storm or other emergency. At last the lieutenant struck away from the frigate.

"Don't go too far, sir!" cried the captain, pointing to windward.

A mist was gathering in that quarter, and was beginning to spread to leeward.

"Ay, ay, sir, I'll not go far!" answered Jack.

Bella Hall, the marine lieutenant's daughter, to whom he was betrothed, watched him a little anxiously as he disappeared in the mist.

"Is there not danger from sharks?" she inquired of her father.

"I think not. But even if there was, Jack would not come to harm with Tom Dalton, who has the reputation of being a sort of shark fighter, watching him."

But he forgot that Tom, a fine, robust young topman, who was now striking out in the direction where the first lieutenant had vanished, had no knife or other weapon with him.

Close in the officer's wake was Ben Wright, the boatswain's mate.

Glancing behind him, and seeing Tom Dalton, he scowled, but he thought he would be able to carry out his murderous intention ere the topman came up.

He quickened his movements, and was in a short time close upon Lieut. Jack, with the mist hiding him from Tom's gaze.

"I think it's about time we swam back," remarked the young officer to Wright, as he suddenly turned. "I hear a hum off there to windward. There's a squall coming up."

"Ay, ay, sir," answered Wright.

Then he commenced apparently to tread water, though this was unnecessary on account of his concealed life-belt.

"Go on, man, go on for the ship!" cried Jack. "Why do you stop?"

A devilish sort of grin convulsed the ugly face of the boatswain's mate. Now he thought was his time. Quickly the villain's hand sought the pocket behind in his swimming trousers. As Lieut. Jack was about repeating his question, up rose the scoundrel's hand, and whiz went the slungshot through the air. Had it not chanced that Jack turned his head at the moment, the leaden missile would have killed him. As it was, it struck him a slanting but very hard blow on the side of his skull. It instantly drove all sense from his brain. His head went down with a jerk, and in this position, with his knees bent under him, he sank.

The water was as clear as crystal. Wright saw the lieutenant sinking toward a broad rock, a few fathoms under the surface, the top of which was covered with those pink weeds called corallines.

"It will never do for the frigate's people to find his body," reflected the wretch. "They would see the mark on his head, and I would be suspected. It is not likely they will ever find it, but to make a sure thing of it, I'll go down and twist my life-belt about his throat and the weeds about his body, so as to keep him to the rock and hide him."

He unwound his belt, and holding it, dove for this purpose, when, to his dismay, Tom Dalton, who, being a wonderful swimmer, was much nearer to him than he thought, went darting down past him, and seizing the lieutenant by the hair, was the next moment rising with the lifeless man to the surface. Wright, letting go his belt, rose quickly, also, and balanced his terrible slungshot.

Whiz! went the deadly instrument again. But Tom was prepared for it. In fact, he had been near enough, having very sharp eyes, to see through the thin cloud of sunlighted mist between him and the villain when the latter hurled the slungshot at the lieutenant.

Dimly, and only partly, had he seen the movement, but he had guessed what it meant. Now, as the leaden ball came

toward him he ducked his head, thus avoiding the missile. Then his right arm shot straight out, like a veritable battering-ram, with its huge muscles, and his fist caught Wright between the eyes. The brute, however, had a head like flint. He was only partially stunned, and he drew back the slung-shot for another fling.

Still holding to the senseless lieutenant with his left hand, Tom was certainly at a disadvantage for combat. He realized that he must act quickly. He was determined to save Lieut. Jack, who was a great favorite with most of the sailors, owing to his kind, manly treatment of them.

"Ay," he reflected, "I will either save him or die in the attempt."

As Wright was about to hurl his deadly missile, Tom, without quitting his hold of the young officer, gave a forward sort of leap from the water, something like a dolphin, and struck his opponent's upraised arm with his fist, directly in the hollow fronting the elbow. This brought the arm down sideways. Dalton had intended to send the slungshot flying sideways and then wrest it from Wright's grasp. Instead of this, however, the lanyard swung round, and the hard ball of lead crashed upon the villain's own skull. His head dropped instantly, and down he went, heels up, shooting into the clear depths of the sea.

Evidently it was the spasmodic contraction of the muscles of the spine, on his receiving the blow, that sent him thus speeding on what proved to be a veritable death dive.

Down among the coralline weeds, on the under-water rock, did his body descend. And as Tom watched him he suddenly beheld, to his amazement and horror, a huge green form, not less than ten feet long, emerge from the weeds and fasten itself to the senseless man. This form resembled a gigantic sea plant, was shaped like a prickly cucumber, with sharp spines projecting from the upper part of it. In fact, it appeared to be a species of that singular creature, the sea-cucumber, or trepang, much sought after for food by the Chinese and others. But this was evidently a large, voracious monster, differing in that respect as well as in size from the small, harmless *beche de mer* just mentioned. Dalton could see the legs of the doomed man double up and shrink as the terrible fish drew the life from him with its numerous suckers or spines. He turned his gaze from the awful spectacle. Then, ere he could look again, the squall which had been fast approaching came howling and roaring around him, driving the mist before it and whitening the sea with foam and spray.

A great, shadowy form went flying past him, at the distance of many fathoms. It was the frigate, with all her sail in except a close-reefed maintopsail. She was driving along with the speed of a thunderbolt.

The island previously mentioned, fronted by numerous rocks, was about half a mile from the struggling sailor.

Still holding to the lieutenant, Tom strove to keep his head as much as possible above the water while he swam with one hand, and with his unusually powerful legs working like a windmill.

Fortunately, he was in a current which drew him along, helped by the gale, toward the island.

But the white breakers were now leaping high off the shore, and Tom feared he and his companion would be dashed to death upon the rocks.

Determined to save Lieut. Jack, the brave topman strained every nerve.

But the spray flying thickly, almost suffocated him.

He was presently close to the breakers, and exhausted and half drowned as he was, he could not hope to obtain a footing on one of those jagged rocks ahead ere he would be thrown against them with force enough to drive the life out of his body. And yet he still held on to his burden—still battled to save his life.

In front of the senseless man did he place himself, that when the shock came his own form might shield his officer's from concussion with the rocks. But now a great mass of white water rolled upon him.

It seemed to hold the sailor under, in spite of all his efforts.

He was suffocating. His senses were leaving him.

At that moment something was tossed up close to him. It was of a dull white color, and like the coil of a serpent. It was the life-belt, which Wright had let go adrift when he prepared to hurl his slungshot at the young topman, after he rose to the surface with the lieutenant. Tom made a grab for it and succeeded in getting it. In an instant, partly buoyed up by the belt, to which he clung with one hand, Tom reared his head above the engulfing waters. Still holding to the lieutenant, he contrived with his single hand to twist the long, supple belt about his breast, but was unable to fasten it. It kept him up, however, and enabled him to better support his burden. The latter, by this time, had regained his senses.

"Where are we? What does this mean?" he gasped. "We are lost!"

"I will save you, sir!" cried Tom, hopefully.

Scarcely had he spoken when a rolling surge hurled him and his companion into the midst of the breakers. Tom, interposing his form so as to shield the young officer, was dashed against a rock, but the life-belt about his breast served as a protection, this coming in contact with the hard, jagged surface. Pierced by a spur of rock, it burst open, the air escaping with a loud report.

Tom, by means of a rugged projection, drew himself up and rolled upon the rock, dragging the lieutenant with him, and thus, by means of the very instrument, the life-belt, which the villainous Wright had brought with him to aid him in his murderous plan, had the lives of his intended victim and his rescuer been saved at the last moment.

Exhausted, faint, and with his brain yet reeling from the painful blow of the slungshot, Lieut. Jack lay in a rift of the rock, his head resting on his arm, while stalwart Tom Dalton stood and signaled with his hand to the distant frigate.

The leaping breakers about him long hindered his being seen from the ship.

But at length the squall passed away to leeward, and the leaping jets of spray becoming lower, Tom hoped he would be observed from the vessel.

Keen lookouts were aboard the man-of-war. Far aloft, on the frigate's royal-yard, swayed a little midshipman, with a spyglass pointed toward the distant breakers.

All at once Dalton saw him double up like a glass ball. He knew what this meant.

The tiny reefer had seen him, and was fairly squatting on the yard with the strain to make his small voice heard below on the deck.

Then there was a puff of smoke from the frigate's bow, followed by the booming of a gun.

Swiftly came the ship to the rescue. Shrilly rang the boatswain's whistle. At last a cutter was lowered, and the two were presently picked up and taken to the frigate.

Many were the praises bestowed upon Tom Dalton for his gallant action, when he told his story, and he was soon promoted a boatswain's mate, in place of the villain who was lost.

Lieut. Jack had a tender and most acceptable nurse in the person of Bella Hall, who had been almost distracted by his supposed loss, and both were now Tom Dalton's life-long friends.

In due time the young officer fully recovered from his injury, and at Java he became the husband of the beautiful girl to whom he was so happily restored.

A skilled naturalist, who attended the wedding, having heard a description of the supposed sea cucumber, which, by his gallant rescuer, had been seen to fasten itself there, on the under-water rock, to the doomed boatswain's mate after he made his death dive, seemed to think that the monster spoken of, instead of being a trepang, was a huge sea scorpion—a fierce, voracious fish, occasionally seen off the line and elsewhere in both oceans.

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